

GCSE English Literature

Eduqas Poetry Anthology - Grade 9 Analysis · Eduqas Anthology

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Eduqas Anthology

24 entries

Grade-9 conceptualised readings of all 18 poems in the Eduqas (C720QS) GCSE English Literature anthology. Each entry builds one controlling argument, then proves it through the writer's methods (AO2), form and structure, and relevant context (AO3), with a short anchor quotation to memorise. Aim to argue what the poet does to the reader and why, not simply to spot devices. Then use the comparison toolkit at the end to bolt two poems together under a single thesis.

Love and relationships

The Manhunt - Simon Armitage

Argument: Armitage presents love as a patient, forensic act of repair, reframing the wounded soldier's body as territory his wife must slowly relearn. **Methods (AO2):** the extended hunting and mapping metaphor casts the wife as a careful tracker handling something fragile; the chain of body-part clauses (jaw, collar-bone, lungs) moves outward to inward, so the physical survey gradually exposes a hidden psychological wound that touch alone cannot mend. The clinical, anatomical lexis ("porcelain", "parachute silk") makes the body both precious and damaged. **Form/structure:** loose rhyming couplets keep falling out of true, the half-rhymes mirroring a marriage knocked off its rhythm; the poem only releases its single full sentence near the end, enacting the slow opening-up of trauma. **Context (AO3):** written from interviews for a documentary on soldiers' partners, it voices the unseen domestic cost of modern conflict and PTSD. **Anchor:** "only then would he let me trace".

Sonnet 43 - Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Argument: Browning attempts to quantify a love she ultimately frames as boundless and spiritual, so the act of counting collapses into faith. **Methods (AO2):** the anaphoric "I love thee" becomes an incantation, each repetition straining to measure the immeasurable; abstract spatial nouns ("depth and breadth and height") borrow the language of geometry only to admit the soul exceeds it. Religious diction recasts romantic devotion as worship, fusing eros with the sacred. **Form/structure:** a Petrarchan sonnet whose volta turns from present love to lost griefs and "childhood's faith", so love absorbs her whole emotional history; the final line gestures beyond death itself. **Context (AO3):** drawn from Sonnets from the Portuguese, written to Robert Browning despite her father's control and her ill health, the poem reclaims a male-dominated form for a woman's voice. **Anchor:** "I love thee to the depth".

She Walks in Beauty - Lord Byron

Argument: Byron idealises the woman by harmonising opposites, presenting her beauty as a moral serenity rather than mere physical attraction. **Methods (AO2):** the governing antithesis of "dark and bright" frames her as a perfect balance of night and day; the simile of starry skies makes her radiance cosmic yet calm. Crucially the diction shifts from surface ("cheek", "brow") to interior virtue ("goodness", "innocent"), so admiration becomes reverence and the gaze is purified of lust. **Form/structure:** the steady iambic tetrameter and regular ABABAB rhyme enact the very harmony the poem praises; the movement from face to mind to heart traces a deliberate ascent. **Context (AO3):** a Romantic celebration of natural over artificial beauty, reportedly inspired by his cousin in mourning black, it idealises feminine grace in the conventional terms of its era. **Anchor:** "of cloudless climes and starry skies".

Valentine - Carol Ann Duffy

Argument: Duffy rejects sentimental romance and insists on a brutal honesty, offering an onion as a truer emblem of love than a rose. **Methods (AO2):** the central conceit of the onion controls everything: its papery light promises tenderness, its tears anticipate pain, its lingering scent and "fierce kiss" warn that love marks and possesses you. The shift from gentle gift-giving to the threatening "Lethal" exposes love's capacity for harm. **Form/structure:** free verse with abrupt one-word lines ("Here.") mimics blunt, unromantic speech; the increasingly short stanzas tighten toward a sinister, possessive close. **Context (AO3):** a feminist subversion of Valentine's clichés, written as Duffy challenges the commercialised, idealised scripts handed to women about love. **Anchor:** "I give you an onion".

Cozy Apologia - Rita Dove

Argument: Dove celebrates ordinary, comfortable married love by gently mocking the grand romantic ideal, arguing that domestic security is its own quiet heroism. **Methods (AO2):** mock-chivalric imagery of armour and a charger ironises old romance, only for the speaker to admit such fantasies are "clichés"; the storm Floyd outside frames the cosy interior, so safety is felt against threat. Tender domestic detail (the pen, the keyboard) grounds love in shared routine. **Form/structure:** the loose pentameter and conversational rhyme keep slipping into casual asides, enacting relaxed intimacy; the central stanza's nostalgic detour returns, contentedly, to the present partner. **Context (AO3):** dedicated to her husband and set during Hurricane Floyd, the poem affirms mature love over the adolescent passions it affectionately ridicules. **Anchor:** "this post-postmodern age is all about".

Nature and time**Living Space - Imtiaz Dharker**

Argument: Dharker finds defiant faith and beauty in precariousness, presenting a slum dwelling whose fragility becomes a kind of miracle. **Methods (AO2):** the imagery of "slanted" beams and structures that "hang" against gravity makes survival itself astonishing; the eggs, fragile and "white", become a fierce emblem of hope balanced over collapse. Light is the final "faith", redeeming the unstable scene. **Form/structure:** irregular, off-kilter lines and broken stanzas visually lean like the building, so form embodies instability; the poem opens out from crooked walls to a transcendent image of light. **Context (AO3):** rooted in the Mumbai slums, it dignifies the resilience of people who build lives in impossible spaces, resisting easy pity. **Anchor:** "Nothing is flat or parallel".

As Imperceptibly as Grief - Emily Dickinson

Argument: Dickinson uses the imperceptible slide of summer into autumn to dramatise how grief and loss recede so gradually we cannot mark their leaving. **Methods (AO2):** the simile equating the season's passing with grief fuses external nature and internal emotion; personification of summer that "lapsed away" like a courteous guest makes loss gentle yet absolute. The diction of dusk and distillation suggests something distilled away rather than torn. **Form/structure:** her signature dashes create hesitant pauses that enact slowness and uncertainty; the slant rhyme refuses neat closure, mirroring grief that never quite resolves. **Context (AO3):** a reclusive nineteenth-century American poet preoccupied with death and time, Dickinson treats transience as a quiet, almost imperceptible theology. **Anchor:** "as imperceptibly as grief".

Death of a Naturalist - Seamus Heaney

Argument: Heaney charts the loss of childhood innocence, as a boy's delighted wonder at nature curdles into adolescent fear and disgust. **Methods (AO2):** the sensuous, tactile opening ("warm thick slobber") makes early nature inviting, but the militarised imagery of frogs as "angry", "poised like mud grenades" recasts the same world as menacing. The plosive, guttural sounds enact revulsion and threat. **Form/structure:** the two-verse-paragraph structure pivots cleanly from idyll to horror, the second shorter and panicked; the shift from sprawling description to clipped retreat enacts the boy fleeing. **Context (AO3):** drawn from Heaney's rural Irish boyhood, the poem reads as a coming-of-age fable about the moment wonder gives way to knowledge and shame. **Anchor:** "the great slime kings".

Hawk Roosting - Ted Hughes

Argument: Hughes voices a hawk of total, unreflective tyranny, exploring nature's amoral power and, by extension, the chilling logic of any absolute ruler. **Methods (AO2):** the dramatic monologue grants the hawk a god-complex, claiming "Creation" was made to serve it; declarative, simple syntax mimics a mind without doubt, while the boast of "no falsifying dream" denies any morality or change. Violence is rendered as natural order. **Form/structure:** six controlled quatrains and end-stopped lines mirror the hawk's rigid dominance; the poem holds the present tense throughout, freezing power into permanence. **Context (AO3):** Hughes denied a fascist reading and called the hawk pure Nature thinking, yet its self-deifying tone invites readers to hear the voice of dictatorship. **Anchor:** "I kill where I please".

To Autumn - John Keats

Argument: Keats transforms autumn from a season of decline into one of ripe, generous fulfilment, gently accepting mortality as part of nature's cycle. **Methods (AO2):** lush imagery of fruit that swells and "plump" hazel shells creates abundance; autumn is personified as a relaxed harvest figure, drowsy and unhurried, so death's approach is calm. The final stanza's sounds of gnats and swallows form an elegiac music of farewell. **Form/structure:** three stanzas trace a day from morning ripeness to evening, and the season from growth to gathering to gentle ending, enacting the cycle; the lengthened final stanza luxuriates in sensation. **Context (AO3):** a Romantic ode written as Keats faced illness and early death, it finds consolation in transience, valuing each stage of the cycle equally. **Anchor:** "seasons of mists and mellow fruitfulness".

Afternoons - Philip Larkin

Argument: Larkin presents young mothers being quietly displaced by their own children, mourning the slow erosion of youthful selfhood by domestic routine. **Methods (AO2):** the imagery of summer "fading" and an autumnal setting frames the women's lives as already declining; the wedding albums lie "near the television", so romance is reduced to inert furniture. The verb "pushing" suggests the children, and time, edging the mothers aside. **Form/structure:** three regular stanzas of flat, unrhymed lines enact monotony; the unfinished final line leaves their fate hanging, as if life simply trails off. **Context (AO3):** Larkin's bleak postwar realism critiques the narrow domestic scripts offered to women, observing them with detached, melancholy pity. **Anchor:** "Something is pushing them / To the side".

Power, place and identity**London - William Blake**

Argument: Blake delivers a furious indictment of a city imprisoned by its own institutions, where every cry exposes a society that manufactures its own misery. **Methods (AO2):** the repeated "every" hammers home that suffering is universal, not isolated; the famous "mind-forg'd manacles" relocate oppression inward, suggesting people are chained by accepted ideology. Synecdoche (the soldier's blood, the chimney-sweep's cry) implicates Church and Crown directly. **Form/structure:** rigid ABAB quatrains and relentless rhythm enact the inescapable, regimented misery; the chiasmic patterning traps the reader as the speaker is trapped. **Context (AO3):** a Romantic Songs of Experience poem, written amid industrial poverty and political repression, it attacks the institutions Blake saw corrupting human freedom. **Anchor:** "the mind-forg'd manacles I hear".

Ozymandias - Percy Bysshe Shelley

Argument: Shelley argues that tyrannical power is ultimately futile, as time reduces even the proudest ruler to a broken ruin swallowed by the desert. **Methods (AO2):** the shattered statue and "trunkless legs" become a visual irony against the boastful inscription; the survival of the sculptor's mocking "sneer" suggests art outlasts the tyrant it depicts. The boundless, level sands engulf all human ambition. **Form/structure:** a sonnet whose nested frame (a speaker quoting a traveller quoting an inscription) distances the king, burying his voice under layers of retelling; the volta exposes the gap between the proud command and the empty wreck. **Context (AO3):** a Romantic poem distrustful of monarchy and empire, written as Shelley critiqued autocratic power and perhaps the hubris of rulers like his own age's kings. **Anchor:** "Look on my Works, ye Mighty".

**The Prelude (extract) -
William Wordsworth**

Argument: Wordsworth dramatises nature as a moral teacher, as a boy's confident theft of a boat is humbled into awe and lasting psychological disturbance. **Methods (AO2):** the boat-stealing opens with assured, pleasurable verbs, but the looming "huge peak, black and huge" is personified as a living rebuke that strides after him; the shift to "trouble" and "darkness" shows nature reshaping his inner life. The sublime overwhelms human pride. **Form/structure:** blank verse flows in long, unbroken sentences enacting the gliding boat and then the mounting fear; the calm framing of the memory in tranquillity contrasts the turbulence recalled. **Context (AO3):** a Romantic autobiographical epic, it embodies Wordsworth's belief that nature forms the moral and imaginative self, the sublime instilling humility. **Anchor:** "a huge peak, black and huge".

Conflict and war

**The Soldier - Rupert
Brooke**

Argument: Brooke presents death in war as a serene, patriotic homecoming, so that the soldier's body sanctifies foreign soil for England. **Methods (AO2):** the conceit of a "corner of a foreign field / That is for ever England" makes the dead body an extension of the nation; maternal personification of England as a nurturing mother frames war as repaying a debt of love. Pastoral, gentle imagery sanitises and idealises death. **Form/structure:** a Petrarchan sonnet uses the octave for the body and the sestet for the soul's eternal peace, the volta turning death into heavenly rest; the soft, regular rhythm soothes rather than alarms. **Context (AO3):** written in the patriotic fervour of 1914 before the war's horrors were known, it represents the idealistic propaganda later shattered by poets like Owen. **Anchor:** "some corner of a foreign field".

**A Wife in London -
Thomas Hardy**

Argument: Hardy exposes the cruel timing of war's grief, as a wife receives news of her husband's death just before his hopeful final letter arrives. **Methods (AO2):** the oppressive fog imagery shrouds London in a deathly pall that mirrors and foreshadows the bereavement; the cold, official diction of the telegram contrasts the warm, intimate voice of the delayed letter. Dramatic irony makes the husband's plans for the future unbearable. **Form/structure:** two titled sections, "The Tragedy" and "The Irony", stage the gap between death and the posthumous letter; the abrupt enjambment and falling rhythm enact the wife's collapse. **Context (AO3):** written during the Boer War, Hardy's poem voices anti-war scepticism by focusing on the private, domestic cost rather than martial glory. **Anchor:** "He has fallen - in the far South Land".

**Dulce et Decorum Est -
Wilfred Owen**

Argument: Owen demolishes the patriotic lie that dying for one's country is sweet and fitting, forcing the reader to witness a gas attack's full horror. **Methods (AO2):** visceral similes (men "like old beggars", coughing "like hags") strip soldiers of glory; the drowning imagery of the gassed man, "guttering, choking, drowning", traps the reader in the speaker's recurring nightmare. The second-person "you" makes complicity direct. **Form/structure:** loose iambic pentameter is repeatedly broken by the panic of the attack; the structure narrows from a wide column of exhausted men to a single dying face, then to the bitter address that names the "old Lie". **Context (AO3):** Owen wrote from the trenches of the First World War to expose the propaganda, quoting Horace's line ironically to destroy it. **Anchor:** "the old Lie: Dulce et decorum est".

**Mametz Wood - Owen
Sheers**

Argument: Sheers argues that the earth slowly returns the buried war dead to memory, insisting the land itself bears witness to a slaughter that must not be forgotten. **Methods (AO2):** the metaphor of the field as a wound that the "earth stands sentinel" over and gradually gives up frames remembrance as inevitable; fragile bird and china imagery ("a chit of bone", "the china plate of a shoulder blade") makes the bones delicate and precious. The dancing skeletons, mouths open, seem to sing across time. **Form/structure:** unrhymed tercets in slow, measured lines enact the patient passage of years; the poem moves from buried to unearched, mirroring memory rising to the surface. **Context (AO3):** commemorating the Welsh soldiers killed at Mametz Wood in 1916, the poem reflects on collective memory and the land's long custody of the dead. **Anchor:** "the wasted young, turning up under their plough".

Comparison method

Build a comparative thesis	Grade 9 answers compare ideas, not features. Open with a single controlling argument that both poems serve, for example: both poets present love as something that wounds as well as heals, but Duffy frames this as a warning while Armitage frames it as patient repair. State the link and the difference in one breath, then prove it.
Track the perspective	Decide each poet's overall attitude before you write. Is war glorified or condemned, is power lasting or futile, is nature nurturing or threatening? Pairing by attitude (Brooke idealises war while Owen and Hardy expose it) gives a sharper contrast than pairing by topic alone, and lets you argue why each poet takes that stance.
Compare methods, not just meaning	Always link a shared idea to differing methods. If both Ozymandias and London critique power, show how Shelley uses a distancing sonnet frame while Blake uses relentless repetition. Naming the technique and explaining its distinct effect on the reader is what lifts AO2 from identification into analysis.
Weave context into the argument	Bolt AO3 onto the point, never bolt it on as a fact. Say that Brooke's idealism reflects the patriotic optimism of 1914, which is precisely what Owen's trench experience later dismantles. Context should explain why the poets disagree, so it deepens the comparison rather than padding it.
Use connectives to structure	Signpost the comparison continuously with whereas, similarly, by contrast and likewise, so the two poems stay in dialogue across every paragraph. Avoid the weak slab structure of one poem then the other; integrate them point by point so the examiner sees sustained, conceptualised comparison throughout.
Embed short, precise quotations	Quote in fragments woven into your sentence, then zoom in on a single word. A short embedded quotation analysed in depth (for example, the connotations of manacles or the irony of sweet) earns far more than a long quotation left unexplored. Always end the point by returning to your overarching argument.