

Teaching Pack

Unseen Poetry – Personal response

Cambridge IGCSE™

Literature in English 0475



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Introduction

This *Teaching Pack* focuses on supporting learners in communicating a considered personal response (directly and by implication). We have chosen to demonstrate this by using 'The Lesson' by Roger McGough, but this lesson plan could be adapted to use any other similar poem which is quite contentious. The lesson is designed for learners that already understand common poetic techniques such as:

- rhyme
- powerful lexis
- alliteration
- symbolism
- metaphor.

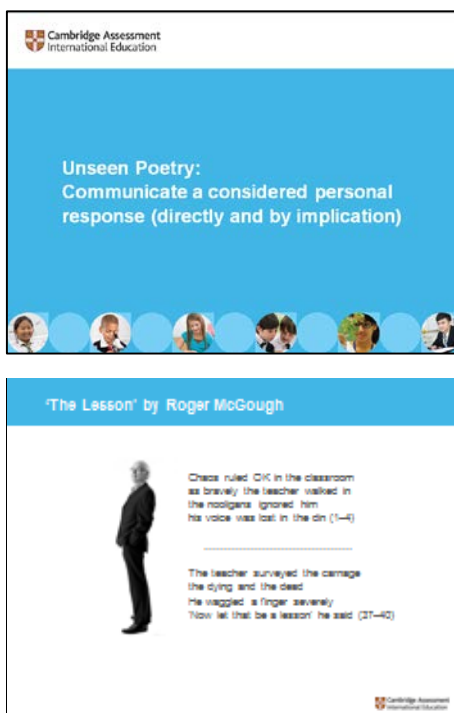
It is expected that learners should already know how to approach an unseen poem. The mnemonic **CATS** is useful as a basic aid to getting learners started in this manner:

- **C**ontent
- **A**ttitudes
- **T**echniques: rhyme, powerful lexis, alliteration, symbolism, metaphor etc.
- **S**tructure.

It would be useful if the learners know what the literary canon is. This can be set as homework in advance of this lesson.

In this *Teaching Pack* we have suggested resources and online links you may like to use as well as some worksheets to print off and use in the classroom with your learners.

A PowerPoint presentation 'Unseen Poetry: Communicate a considered personal response (directly and by implication)' is also provided for you to use alongside this pack (**PowerPoint slides 1–7**).



Lesson plan – Personal response (Unseen Poetry)



Resources

- Copy of a poem the learners have (preferably) not seen before, for example, 'The Lesson' by Roger McGough: www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/roger-mcgough/the-lesson
- **Worksheet 1:** Personal responses to education (displayed around the classroom for discussion)
- **Worksheet 2:** Review sheet
- **Worksheet 3:** Model analysis
- **PowerPoint slides** (1–7)
- **Teacher notes**
- Access to 'Expanding the literary canon' on Youtube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHqzEDFRXJY&t=5s
- Highlighters and pens to annotate the poem

Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson:

- **all** learners should be able to: Offer up a personal response to the poem
- **most** learners will be able to: Offer up a considered personal response contextualising the poem against a basic definition of the literary canon
- **some** learners will be able to: Offer up an implied considered personal response by using evaluative words and phrases.

Timings	Activity
	Starter/Introduction Show learners an image of your chosen poet. Choose one where the poet is looking quite serious. PowerPoint slide 1 features an image of Roger McGough, who wrote the poem, 'The Lesson'. Ask what type of poetry you would expect from this poet. Allow learners to freely answer this question with their own opinions. It is good if they are biased with their expectations (serious, stern, old fashioned, etc.) as the poem chosen should surprise them in its content. Hand out or display the quotations from Worksheet 1 (or PowerPoint slide 2), and allow learners to discuss their own opinions about education. Introduce the name of the poem, e.g. 'The Lesson'. Ask them to predict what perspectives on education they might expect the poet to refer to.
	Main lesson Hand out copies of the poem and highlighter pens. Read the poem out loud to the class. Ask how their initial expectations have been challenged, if at all. Are they surprised at the content? Why? Learners complete the tasks in PowerPoint slide 3 (Reading the poem – initial responses) in their books. Starter answers: • Where is the poem set? The classroom • What are the feelings expressed in the poem? Anger, hurt, fear, bravado, pain, etc. • How does this poem compare to others you have studied? Unusual content and perspective, challenging the nature of learning and education. • Write down two questions in relation to this poem. - Why does the teacher go in? - Why does the Head react in this manner? • Pass these on to someone in the room to answer. • Share the most interesting questions and responses from other learners. Explain that these initial thoughts are a <u>personal response</u> and that the rest of the lesson will be spent looking at developing and informing these responses considering the idea of the <u>literary canon</u> and using evaluative phrases to imply a response. Task Define the idea and purpose of the literary canon. The term 'literary canon' refers to a body of books, narratives and other texts considered to be the most important and influential of a particular time period or place. A suggested video link to help think about the purpose: www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHgzEDFRXJY&t=5s
	

Timings	Activity
	Read each statement on PowerPoint slide 4 in turn: • 'I felt, with my first poem, that I had entered this brotherhood [the poetry canon]. Which turned out not to be the case.' Ask learners why McGough did not enter into the literary canon with his poem, 'The Lesson'. Read the answer: • 'The implication was that if we were Liverpool poets we couldn't be serious.' Learners discuss whether 'The Lesson' is a serious poem. Learners discuss: • Should 'The Lesson' be part of the literary canon? Give the learners a few minutes to add to their discussions to their initial responses from the starter. Learners can use the following sentence starter to help them add to their notes: <i>'The Lesson' should be /should not be added to the literary canon because...</i> Optional additional task: Learners read the comment taken from a member of the public from the Poem Hunter website on PowerPoint slide 5. • What is their reaction to this? • Do they agree or disagree with the idea that this is a genius poem?
	Analysis Divide up the poem amongst the learners. 10 pairs of learners will cover the 10 stanzas. Ask the learners to focus on identifying CATS and their effects: • Content • Attitudes • Techniques: rhyme, powerful lexis, alliteration, symbolism, metaphor, etc. • Structure. Reinforce that, as long as they can justify opinions, all reasonable answers are acceptable in Unseen exams. Share their ideas.

Timings	Activity
	Application Set the essay question: Based on your thoughts on <i>education</i>, the <i>canon</i> and your consideration of the <i>content</i> of the poem, what is your reaction to McGough’s ‘The Lesson’? Read the model analysis on Worksheet 2 (or PowerPoint slide 6). Explain the structure of this considered personal response to the poem. Highlight the evaluative phrases that imply a considered response (‘indeed’, ‘notably’, ‘particularly’, etc.). Learners create their own considered, personal response to the poem.
	Plenary Using Worksheet 3 (PowerPoint slide 7) learners should read each other’s work and offer up opinions as to how they can improve their considered responses to unseen poetry. Homework Learners research the idea of the literary canon and create a poster. This will help to contextualise any further analysis of unseen poetry for learners.

Teacher notes



What type of poetry would you expect from this poet?

Allow learners to freely answer this question with their own opinions. It is good if they are biased with their expectations (serious, stern, old fashioned, etc.) as the poem chosen should surprise them in its content.

Once the poem has been read to the class, then hopefully this should have challenged their initial expectations about the content and style of poetry.

Starting points for the answers to the questions on **PowerPoint slide 3**:

Where is it set?

The classroom

What are the feelings expressed?

Anger, hurt, fear, bravado, pain, etc.

How does this poem compare to others you have studied?

Unusual content and perspective, challenging the nature of learning and education.

Write down two questions in relation to this poem.

Why does the teacher go in?

Why does the Head react in this manner?

Explain that these initial thoughts are a personal response and that the rest of the lesson will be spent looking at developing and informing these responses considering the idea of the literary canon and using evaluative phrases to imply a response.

The term 'literary canon' refers to a body of books, narratives and other texts considered to be the most important and influential of a particular time period or place. A suggested video link to help think about the purpose: www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHgzEDFRXJY&t=5s

Give learners a few minutes to add to their discussions to their initial responses from the starter. Learners can use the following sentence starter to help them add to their notes:

'The Lesson' should be / should not be added to the literary canon because...

Optional additional task:

Learners read the comment taken from a member of the public from the Poem Hunter website on **PowerPoint slide 6**.

What is their reaction to this?

Do they agree or disagree with the idea that this is a genius poem?

Reinforce that, as long as they can justify opinions, all reasonable answers are acceptable in Unseen exams. Highlight the evaluative phrases that imply a considered response (indeed, notably, particularly, etc.) on **Worksheet 2: Model analysis**.



Lesson resources

Worksheet 1: Personal responses to education

Worksheet 2: Model analysis

Worksheet 3: Self-/peer-assessment sheet

Worksheet 1: Personal responses to education



Here are some personal responses to the concept of 'education':

I've never let my school interfere with my education.

Mark Twain

Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school.

Albert Einstein

My mother said I must always be intolerant of ignorance but understanding of illiteracy. That some people, unable to go to school, were more educated and more intelligent than college professors.

Maya Angelou

We are taught you must blame your father, your sisters, your brothers, the school, the teachers – but never blame yourself. It's never your fault. But it's always your fault, because if you wanted to change you're the one who has got to change.

Katharine Hepburn



Worksheet 2: Model analysis

A true education should aim to shock and inspire action and reading texts that broaden a reader's capacity to humanise teachers is an often-used plotline.

*However, McGough's poem does not cover this topic safely. **Indeed**, it captures a bloody and visceral sense of a teacher's frustration by describing the dark levels of violence he stoops to; this is bound to be controversial and divisive at a time when political violence is rife.*

By positioning the reader in such a way as to make them feel very unsafe themselves, through his teacher's unrestrained and bloodthirsty violent actions, McGough is deeply effective in his engaging and accessible style.

***Notably**, the clever way in which the alliterative rhythm, with the repetition of the 'H' consonant, mirrors the action and sound of his 'sword' as the teacher moves between the rhyming 'rows' to rhythmically cut off 'fingers, feet or toes' to teach the 'undisciplined students' a lesson is **particularly** effective.*

My thoughts on education

**My initial response to the poem –
overview**

Why I think this

What techniques make me think this

Worksheet 3: Self-/peer-assessment sheet



Level 3	10 9 8	- demonstrates knowledge by making a little supporting reference to the text (AO1) - makes some relevant comments (AO2) - shows a basic understanding of surface meaning of the text and language (AO3) - attempts to communicate a basic personal response (AO4)
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Level 5	16 15 14	- demonstrates knowledge by showing some thoroughness in the use of supporting evidence from the text (AO1) - shows understanding of the text and some of its deeper implications (AO2) - makes some response to the way the writer uses language (AO3) - makes a reasonably developed relevant personal response (AO4)
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Level 8	25 24 23	- demonstrates knowledge by incorporating well-selected reference to the text skilfully and with flair (AO1) - sustains a critical understanding of the text showing individuality and insight (AO2) - responds sensitively and in considerable detail to the way the writer achieves her/his effects (AO3) - sustains personal and evaluative engagement with task and text (AO4)
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What went well:



What could be improved:



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