



Cambridge Assessment
International Education

Teaching Pack

Poetry – Using quotations from ‘Mid-Term Break’
by Seamus Heaney

Cambridge O Level
Literature in English 2010



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Introduction

This *Teaching Pack* focuses on supporting learners to understand how to integrate apposite quotations and comment to support their own opinions of poetry.

The lesson presented here is designed for learners that already understand what PEEAL (Point / Evidence / Explain / Analyse / Link) is as a means of answering literature questions. Ideally, they should have been introduced to and have used the PEEAL help sheet (**Worksheet 3**) before this lesson. If learners have not used the PEEAL pie, this could be introduced in the starter activity as a success criterion before learners begin writing a PEEAL response.

The lesson presented here is designed for learners that already understand what a personal response is. That means they should know how they apply the meaning, themes and poet’s attitude of a poem in relation to their ideas about the world and contemporary or historical events, and to their own personal experiences and feelings.

Learners should have experience of the meaning, themes, context and the poet’s attitude expressed in the poem ‘Mid-Term Break’ by Seamus Heaney from the previous lesson. Please see **Worksheet 1**: ‘Mid-Term Break – Overview’ to help with this.

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

Lesson plan – Using quotations from ‘Mid-Term Break’ by Seamus Heaney



Resources

- ‘Mid-Term Break’ by Seamus Heaney
- **Worksheet 1:** ‘Mid-Term Break’ – Overview (which should have been handed out and used in the previous lesson)
- **Worksheet 2:** PEEAL writer’s pie
- **Worksheet 3:** PEEAL help sheet
- **Worksheet 4:** Model example of PEEAL
- **Worksheet 5:** My considered, personal response
- **Teacher notes**

Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson:

- **all** learners should be able to: Explain the meaning and context of relevant quotations, linking ideas to the essay question
- **most** learners should be able to: Analyse how the writer’s use of language devices in the selected quotations makes the reader feel
- **some** learners will be able to: Express accurate explanations and insightful analysis of the selected quotations in relation to the essay question.

Timings	Activity
	Starter/Introduction Display the following diagram on the board. Explain the importance of understanding the themes and poet’s attitude of the poem as when we answer an essay question we must comment on how the poet has used language and structural devices to communicate these things: Poet’s use of language devices → Poet’s attitude / Focus of the essay question Poet’s use of structural devices → Poet’s attitude / Focus of the essay question Task: Why do we need to use quotations/evidence to help us in this process? - mark scheme states that we must use evidence from the text to support our ideas and opinions (AO1 – supporting reference. See mark scheme for Paper 1) - helps us to show that our ideas are legitimate as they can be evidenced in the text - helps us to achieve the above diagram as it allows us to show how the writer’s use of language communicates their attitude / the focus of the essay question. Emphasise that no quotations are needed when discussing structure.
 	Main lesson Introduce the essay question: How does Heaney convey a deep sense of sadness and loss in the poem ‘Mid-Term Break’? <i>During the following part of the lesson, the teacher should move around the room asking questions that function to check the learning and progress learners are making.</i> Task: Group learners into pairs or threes. Each group should then select six quotations that they would use from the poem to answer this essay question. Refer to the Teacher notes to further help guide learners in how they should make their selection. Extension activity: What is your favourite quotation from the ones that your group has selected? Give reasons for your opinions. (Individual) Task: Pairs merge with another pair. Learners discuss the six quotations that they have selected, and give reasons for their choices. Extension activity: Learners discuss their ideas about what messages the poet is giving the reader about life, death and family. Hand out the PEEAL writer’s pie (Worksheet 2).

Timings	Activity
 	Task: Emphasise that all segments of the pie are important, but ask learners to discuss in pairs: what are the five most important segments of the pie, and why? Make it clear to the learners that the five most important segments are 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 (see Worksheet 3) – see Teacher notes below for justification of this. Teacher again emphasises the importance of selecting quotations / using evidence. If the quotation / evidence is ineffective then so will our explanations of analysis be in our PEEAL paragraphs. Task: In groups of four, learners each select one quotation from the six that they have decided upon as a group. Using the PEEAL writer's pie (Worksheet 2) as a success criterion, and the PEEAL help sheet (Worksheet 3) to help them express their ideas, learners each write a PEEAL paragraph that answers the question. Extension: Learners select another quotation of their choice, or from the quotations the group has selected, and write another PEEAL paragraph that answers the question.
	Plenary Learners exchange their writing with one another. Using the writer's pie, and focusing on segments 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 only, the learners peer assess each other's writing by colouring it in (or ticking it appropriately). Then, depending on how they have completed the pie, the learners should write two written targets on the pie as feedback. Remember to ask the learner who is completing the pie to put their name at the top of the sheet, and then put the name of the learner whose writing it is at the bottom of the sheet. This will allow you as the teacher to give feedback to the learner whose writing it is, but it will also enable you to give feedback to the learner who completed the pie on how well he/she understood the success criteria. Homework: Based on the feedback given in the plenary from their peer, learners write one more PEEAL paragraph using any one of their group's six quotations to answer the question.

Teacher notes



Understand how to integrate apposite quotations and comment to support opinions of poetry.

Key words

Key words / concepts you could highlight during the lesson, or teach before the lesson:

Explanation – When we explain what the quotation means, and its context, in relation to the examination question.

Analysis – When we analyse how particular language devices in the quotation make the reader feel in relation to the examination question.

Key themes

Loss, death, family, love, regret, childhood, fate and the loss of innocence.

- When selecting quotations to answer a question, encourage learners to select phrases and lines rather than single words. In addition, emphasise the importance of selecting quotations that contain imagery. Discourage learners from using long quotations. They do not get any marks for re-writing the text!
- PEEAL pie:
 - Number 4 – Perhaps the most important of all! If the evidence that learners use is not effective or relevant to the examination question then neither will be their explanations or analysis.
 - Number 5 – Often learners fall into the trap of making statements rather than supporting them with detailed reasons. Encourage them to back up their ideas with clear explanations by adding these words to their sentences.
 - Number 6 – Learners should focus on explaining the meaning and context of their quotation in relation to the essay question when explaining. Ensure that the learners are not too wordy. Instead, encourage them to be very specific and direct in their use of language. They are not marked for their own use of language when responding to literature. Rather, they are marked for their ability to comment on the effects of the writer's use of language.
 - Numbers 7 and 8 – Same applies for number 7 as number 6. However, their focus should be on how the writer's use of language devices makes the reader feel in relation to the question. See the PEEAL help sheet for further guidance and sentence starters that learners should use in their explanations and analysis.
- When responding to Literature questions, learners should aim to write 5–7 PEEAL paragraphs in total whereby they use quotations as evidence to explain and analyse their ideas in response to the examination question. This is not a definitive number, but the mark scheme makes it clear that they should respond to the whole text, not a part of it.

Teacher notes, continued



- When responding to literature it is tempting to use the mantra, ‘there is no such thing as a wrong answer’. Remember that for Paper 1, the poems are a collection of set texts. Therefore, the learners must demonstrate knowledge of the writer’s intended meanings and attitudes. They cannot just simply apply their own interpretation of the poem in relation to the question. In addition, all ideas must be evidenced from the text in the form of quotations. Furthermore, learners will not get marks for historical or biographical responses. This is after all a literature essay. They must use the quotations from the text to answer the question.
- Encourage learners to keep their writing specific and direct when responding to Literature questions. They get no marks for the effects they create in their use of language. Instead, they get marks for showing how the writer has used language to create effects. Also, they only have 45 minutes to respond to each essay (apart from the questions in Paper 4).
- Emphasise that they should not be wordy. In fact, they should do their best not to waste words. All the words they write should be tightly focused on explaining and analysing the quotation in relation to the question. The learners do not in fact need to use a Point in their paragraphs. Instead, they can just start with the quotation. However, for lower ability learners the Point often does help focus them on the topic of the paragraph that they are writing.
- Make it clear to the learners that they should not use quotations that they do not understand. There is always a variety of evidence to choose from in any text. Therefore, make sure learners know that they should use the evidence they feel is the most obvious and clear, rather than the quotations that seem overly technical or ‘importantly’ vague.

Lesson resources



Worksheet 1: ‘Mid-Term Break’ – Overview

Worksheet 2: PEEAL writer’s pie

Worksheet 3: PEEAL help sheet

Worksheet 4: Model example of PEEAL

Worksheet 5: My considered, personal response



Worksheet 1: ‘Mid-Term Break’ – Overview

Meaning and context

This is a very emotional, autobiographical poem. It is based on the death of Heaney's four-year-old brother (Christopher) when he was hit by a car while playing in his local neighbourhood. Heaney was 12 going on 13 and studying at St. Columb's (boarding) College in Derry, Northern Ireland at the time of his brother's death.

The poem opens during that moment where Heaney has been called out of class as he has just been told that his brother has died. The reader does not know this at the start of the poem, and as a result of the somewhat cheerful title, ‘Mid-Term Break’, we are confused by the sense of loneliness and sorrow that is evoked in the first stanza. Usually, a mid-term break is a time of happiness and relief. Therefore, we are thrown into a sense of mystery and uncertainty by the isolation and ominous atmosphere here.

The sense of mystery develops in the next stanza when we learn that his father (the pillar of any boy's life) is crying, and then there is a mention of a funeral. This, along with Big Jim's idiom, create a definite sadness and alarm; especially as it is masculine figures that seem to be grieving so greatly.

The following two stanzas witness Heaney walk through his family home. However, it is a strange and surreal place in that it is unfamiliar to him. There is a baby (the symbol of innocence) laughing in its pram. This is obviously ironic, and a symbol of the innocence we lose as we become aware of our own mortality. In addition, the old men stand for him, shake his hand and try to comfort him. This develops the sense of mystery and sorrow as we realise that the death must be very tragic as elders do not stand for the young to greet them. Therefore, we are thrust into the realisation that the funeral and death must be very personal to the narrator. The whispers heighten this feeling as we feel that the crowd of strangers (in what should be his private home) are intrusive and highlight that the focus of this funeral is the personal loss of the narrator.

It is at the end of stanza four that we learn that the death is not that of his mother. In stanza five she holds his hand and despairs with coughs and ‘angry tearless sighs’. It is in this stanza that we understand that it is not yet the funeral, but the viewing of the body before the funeral, as ‘the ambulance arrived / With the corpse’. This keeps us in suspense as we still do not know who has died, and what relation the narrator has with that person.

Stanza six begins startlingly as it jumps to the next morning. Mornings are usually to do with re-birth, but the renewal here is tragic as it symbolises the realisation of a changed world. One where the narrator has no brother. The snowdrops and candles are touching and add a nostalgic feeling. However, these contrasting images of warmth and coldness symbolise life and death, memory and reality. The moment is even more tragic here when we learn that it has been six weeks since the poet saw his brother last.

Stanza seven contains the revelation of how his brother died. The poppy image not only gives us an impression of the seemingly harmless, but fatal, mark that blemishes his younger brother's body, but is also a solemn symbol of remembrance. The simplicity of the detail of what occurred in the accident also makes the events seem somewhat surreal and unbelievable; especially as he looks so peaceful in his coffin.

Worksheet 1: ‘Mid-Term Break’ – Overview, continued



The final one-line stanza delivers the tragic truth of how young the brother was. Again, the simple, matter-of-fact image is emotive and disturbing. It is especially shocking when juxtaposed with the title, and how we felt at the start of the poem.

Note: Following his death in 2013, Heaney was buried next to his young brother at St. Mary’s Parish Church.

www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/tragedy-of-seamus-heaneys-brother-explored-in-poetry-day-35100685.html

Poet’s attitude

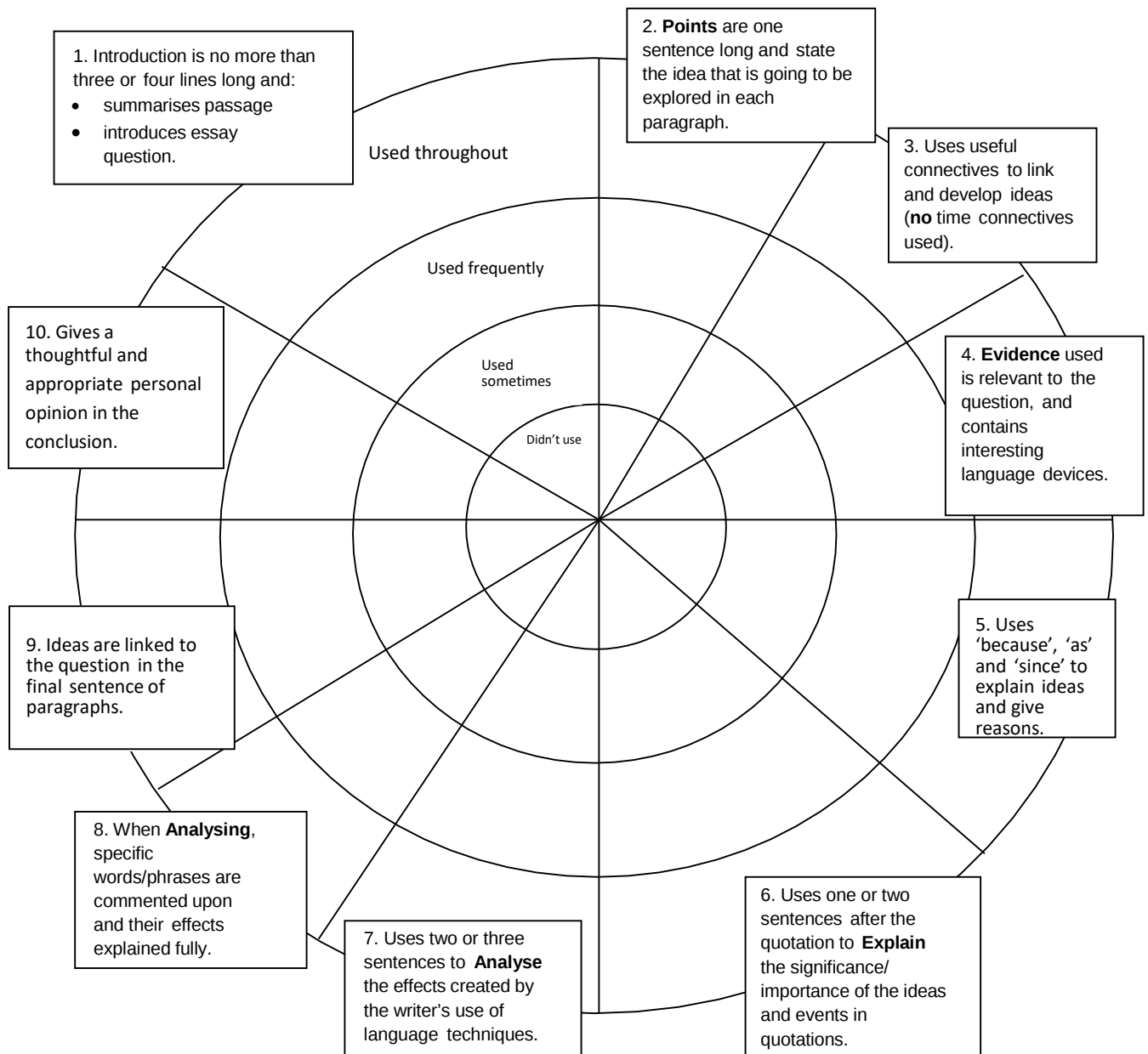
The poet seems to be exploring themes of loss, fate, family, life and death, and the loss of innocence (when we realise our own mortality). It is interesting to note that there is no reference to the afterlife here. This is a poem about how death affects the living (after all it does not really affect the dead – as they are already dead and gone to where the dead go!). It is about how we, as the living, cope with the rituals, the emotions and the social interactions surrounding the death of a loved one. The poem is made all the more tragic and shocking in that the death is that of a child.

The messages that come out of this poem seem to be about how no one (no matter who we are, or how young or old we are) can escape death, and that it will come to us all when we least expect it. The poem also reminds us that we will never be prepared for the loss of a loved one, and will never understand it when it does happen. It shows us how very unprepared we will be for it, and how awkward and strange grieving with others can be. The poem tables questions about how we are able to grieve when others are involved and watching us. The poet seems restrained and restricted in his grief here for his own brother because of the presence of others.

Most of all, the poem is about the loss of innocence. The poet is understandably broken by the death of his brother. Yet, the effects of his death break his life. And at the end of the poem we realise that it is not a ‘Mid-Term Break’ from his school, but a break that has occurred in his life. Nothing will be the same for him again.



Worksheet 2: PEEAL writer's pie



Grade this draft merits: _____

In order to improve, I need to:

1. _____
_____.
2. _____
_____.



Worksheet 3: PEEAL help sheet

Point Evidence Explain Analyse Link

Useful words to use when writing a PEEAL paragraph

Point:

When making your point, try to identify a technique that the writer has used, how the writer has made the reader or audience feel at some point in the passage or what the atmosphere is at some point in the passage.

All of your points should be relevant to the question.

The rest of your paragraph should explain and analyse the effects created by your quotation (evidence), and how your quotation (evidence) proves your point.

At the beginning of the passage, the atmosphere is _____ and _____.

(Author's surname) creates a strong feeling of tension and suspense when _____

In addition, the reader is made to feel worried when _____

However, the audience feels a sense of hatred towards (a character) as _____

Evidence:

Ensure that you select interesting evidence that supports the point you have just made and helps you answer the essay question. Your evidence should also allow you to comment on a range of effects that are created by the writer's use of language and/or structure (e.g. stagecraft in a play, use of flashback / narrative style in a novel). Therefore, choose your evidence carefully!



Worksheet 3: PEEAL help sheet, continued

Explain:

When you explain, explain the significance of the events taking place in relation to the question. Also, explain any other interesting things that your evidence shows to do with character, relationships between characters, dramatic irony, foreshadowing and themes.

Always use the words ‘because’, ‘as’ and ‘since’ to develop your ideas fully.

This shows _____ because/as/since _____

This highlights that _____ because/as/since _____

This emphasises _____ because/as/since _____

This helps the reader to understand that _____
because/as/since _____

This reinforces the idea that _____
because/as/since _____

The fact that _____
because/as/since _____



Worksheet 3: PEEAL help sheet, continued

Analyse:

Analyse the effects that the writer’s use of language and structure have on the reader. Pick out particular words and phrases and discuss how they make the reader feel and think towards characters, events and themes.

Always use the words ‘because’, ‘as’ and ‘since’ to develop your ideas fully.

The words ‘xxxx’, ‘xxxx’ and ‘xxxx’ suggest that / make the reader feel / give the idea that / create a sense of _____
because/as/since _____.

The phrase ‘xxxx xxxx’ creates an ominous atmosphere because/as/since _____
_____.

The writer’s use of the word ‘xxxx’ here implies that _____
because/as/since _____.

The phrase ‘xxxx xxxx xxxx’ gives the character a [e.g. hostile tone] as the strong alliterated [e.g. ‘b’] sounds make him sound like he is [e.g. angry and spitting out his words].

The word/words/phrase gives a _____ and _____ impression/feeling/idea because _____.

The use of simile/metaphor/personification/alliteration conveys a _____ idea/feeling as _____.

Worksheet 3: PEEAL help sheet, continued



Link:

In the last sentence or two of your paragraph, clearly link the ideas you have discussed with the question. In other words, show how the ideas you have discussed in this paragraph answer the question.

Therefore, this clearly shows that _____.

As a result, this means that the writer has _____.

Consequently, this creates a sense of _____.



Worksheet 4: Model example of PEEAL

This is a model example of PEEAL paragraphs for teacher reference, and to use with learners in a follow up lesson once they have written their own. Students can reflect on their own writing in comparison with this example and then, along with the feedback from the writer pie, redraft their writing.

How does Heaney convey a deep sense of sadness and loss in the poem ‘Mid-Term Break’?

A sense of distress and sadness is created upon his arrival home. ‘In the porch I met my father crying –’ This evokes a great deal of sadness as the first thing he is greeted with is the upsetting and startling sight of his father crying. Also, his father is outside, adding the idea that something terrible is waiting in the house. It signals that things are very wrong. A father is supposed to be the pillar of the family and a strong stereotype exists that men are not supposed to cry in public. Therefore, this image is shocking and deeply concerning. It emphasises that something terrible has happened and adds a sense of distress and concern. This is evident in the poet’s tone as the long pause at the end of the line conveys his worry and anxiety at the sight.

‘He had always taken funerals in his stride –’ Here it is shared with the reader that the reason for the solemnity and sadness is because of a funeral. However, the funeral seems to have had a profoundly sad impact on his family and the community. His father’s crying is made more alarming as funerals had always been easy for him to cope with, but not this one. The use of the casual colloquial language here ‘in his stride’ mimics the idioms we often use when referring to and dealing with death. It contrasts with the formality of events and adds a tender sympathy to the narrator’s voice which carries a sadness. Furthermore, ‘Big Jim Evans’ (another strong male figure who is not supposed to show emotion) is deeply disturbed by the funeral too and says ‘it was a hard blow.’ The use of further idioms here has the same effect and makes us feel that the events are too hard for the characters to face and speak about directly. This adds to the mystery and distress the reader feels.

Worksheet 5: My considered, personal response



Now that you have considered the meaning, themes and poet's attitude of the poem (and explored some of the key quotations), what does this poem make you think about in terms of what is happening in our world at the moment? Or, can you relate personally to the ideas in this poem? Write up your thoughts by using the writing frame below.

The meaning of this poem makes me think about _____

because _____

The themes of _____ and _____ in the poem also apply to this as

Furthermore, given the poet's attitude in the poem, I believe the poet would feel _____

_____ about this since

Extension activity:

Choose one of the key quotations that your group identified and discussed. How does this quotation relate to the personal response you have written above? Write a paragraph in your notebook explaining your ideas carefully.

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