

Russell Carey

# Cambridge IGCSE<sup>®</sup> and O Level **Literature in English**

Coursebook

Second edition

**Completely Cambridge**  
Cambridge resources  
for  
Cambridge qualifications

SAMPLE

Russell Carey

Cambridge IGCSE® and O Level

# Literature in English

Coursebook

Second edition



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

SAMPLE

# Contents

How to use this book	iv
<b>Part 1 Introduction</b>	
Unit 1 How to get the most from this coursebook	2
Unit 2 Approaching your course	6
<b>Part 2 Building your skills: Poetry</b>	
Unit 3 Introducing poetry	12
Unit 4 Reading for meaning	19
Unit 5 Exploring language and structure	32
Unit 6 Developing an informed personal response to a poem	51
<b>Part 3 Building your skills: Prose</b>	
Unit 7 Introducing prose	64
Unit 8 Responding to characters	70
Unit 9 Responding to setting and mood	85
Unit 10 Responding to narrative viewpoint	94
Unit 11 Developing an informed personal response to a short story	108
<b>Part 4 Building your skills: Drama</b>	
Unit 12 Introducing drama	122
Unit 13 Responding to characters and themes	128
Unit 14 Responding to structure and language	142
Unit 15 Developing an informed personal response to drama	156
<b>Part 5 Consolidating your writing skills</b>	
Unit 16 Critical writing	164
Unit 17 A closer look at essay technique	172
<b>Part 6 Approaching assessment</b>	
Unit 18 Approaching set texts	182
Unit 19 Approaching unseen poems and prose extracts	199
Unit 20 Approaching the coursework portfolio	217
Appendix: the structure of your assessment	230
Glossary	232
Acknowledgements	234

# How to use this book

You will find several different features on the pages of this coursebook. These are there to help you as you progress through the book, and through your literature course.

## Learning outcomes

**By the end of this unit, you will be able to:**

- develop further confidence in reading for meaning
- explore how poets use words and sounds to create specific effects
- analyse the way poets use structure to convey their ideas
- use appropriate terminology effectively when discussing poems.

**Learning outcomes** set the scene for each unit, help with navigation through the coursebook and indicate the important concepts covered in the unit.

**Activities** will help you to become better readers of texts. They will encourage you to reflect not only on the content of what you are reading, but also on the important role of the writer. Exploring the deliberate choices writers make in their writing will help you to sharpen your skills of analysis. It will also increase your enjoyment of the texts you study. In addition, you will find examples of students' responses to questions, together with teacher feedback.

## ACTIVITY 1

Read the poem 'Afternoons' carefully, and then read it again. Remember that even very experienced readers might not fully understand a text the first time they read it. Next answer the following questions.

How much of the poem do you think you understand? About half of it? Or more than half? Or less than half?

Write a summary of what you think the poem is about, in no more than two sentences.

## KEY TERM

**Simile:** where one thing is compared to another. It is easy to spot them, as they signal comparison by using the words 'like', 'as' or 'as if'.

**Key terms** are clear and straightforward definitions of the most important terms in the course. When a key term is used in this coursebook for the first time, it is shown in **bold** and defined nearby in a Key term feature alongside the text. All key terms can also be found in the Glossary at the back of the coursebook.



## LINK

The sonnet is a very traditional type of poem in its use of structure and rhyme. Compare this rigid format with the freer style of Walt Whitman's poem later in this unit.

**Links** refer you to other pages or units in the coursebook. You might, for example, be encouraged to go back and recap information or guidance provided earlier in the coursebook, to remind yourself of what you learned in earlier units. Ideas, terms and skills are often relevant to more than one unit.

**Tips** offer helpful advice on your literature course and often build on the information given in the main text.



## TIP

When referring to short poems in your writing, put the title in single inverted commas: e.g. 'To His Coy Mistress'. You also do this for short stories. However, for longer texts – novels, plays and long poems – you should use:

- italics when typing – e.g. *Lord of the Flies*, *The Taming of the Shrew*
- underlining when handwriting – e.g. Lord of the Flies, The Taming of the Shrew.

**Did you know?** boxes contain interesting general knowledge about writers and their works.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Mary Ann Evans used the male name George Eliot so she could be taken seriously at the time she wrote. The famous Brontë sisters, Charlotte (1816–1855), Emily (1818–1848) and Anne (1820–1849), were all novelists who wrote using the male names Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell.

**EXTENSION ACTIVITY**

Search for the recording made in 1890 by Alfred, Lord Tennyson of his famous poem 'The Charge of the Light Brigade', about the Battle of Balaclava during the Crimean War, written in 1854. Read the words of the poem as you listen to Tennyson's recital.

**Extension activities** suggest useful learning activities you could do on your own or perhaps working with another student. You are not required to do these activities, but they are there if you wish to have a go, and have the time to do them.

**Further reading** features point you in the direction of other poems, plays and prose texts you may like to read for your own enjoyment or interest. You will be very busy during your literature course, with other subjects as well as literature, but you might find time to dip into some of the texts that are recommended. If you find something you like, you could return to reading it after you have finished the course. Many students find that study of literature at this level is just the beginning of a lifelong interest in reading.

**FURTHER READING**

Hughes was a keen angler, and one of his famous poems was about a fish called a pike. In 'Pike', he describes the power and violence of this fish with its 'malevolent aged grin'. You can hear a recording of the poem, read by Hughes, at [www.poetryarchive.org](http://www.poetryarchive.org).

**Check your progress**

**Exploring language and structure**

When exploring language and structure as you study a poem, remember to consider the key areas listed below. It is not possible to impose an order for you to follow, as readers respond to poems in different ways.

You could use the following active learning techniques to identify and comment on key aspects of language and structure in the poems you are studying:

- annotation
- mind maps
- lists.

Areas to consider	Comment on the effects of ...
Words appealing to senses	words appealing to sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell
Imagery	similes and metaphors personification
Sound	alliteration assonance onomatopoeia rhyme rhythm
Tone	the tone of any 'voice' or 'voices' in the poem shifts in tone
Structure	organisation of content in stanzas / stages of the poem use of traditional (e.g. sonnet) or other forms (e.g. free verse)

**Check your progress** boxes appear at the end of the unit and provide a quick reminder of important key points that have just been covered. They allow you time to reflect on what you have just learned, and to look again at any points you are not clear about. They also include at least one activity to help you check your understanding.

**Self-evaluation** tables give you the opportunity at the end of units to consider the skills that you have practised and assess how confident you feel going forward. You can rate your confidence level from 1 (low) to 5 (high). If you want to revisit the section where they are covered, the 'Look again' column directs you to the relevant point. It is a good idea to return to these tables again and see how your confidence has grown.

**Self-evaluation**

Reflect on the skills below and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If needed, revisit the section listed in the 'Look again' column. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

Skill	Confidence level	Look again
I am able to explore a range of definitions of what poetry is.		3.0
I can appreciate the history of poetry in English.		3.0
I am aware of the range of topics that feature regularly in poems.		3.1
I understand the key skills required for close reading of literary texts.		3.2
I appreciate the importance of active learning when studying literature.		3.3



## Unit 5

# Exploring language and structure

32

### Learning outcomes

*By the end of this unit, you will be able to:*

- develop further confidence in reading for meaning
- explore how poets use words and sounds to create specific effects
- analyse the ways in which poets use structure to convey their ideas
- use appropriate terminology effectively when discussing poems.



#### KEY TERM

**Imagery:** plays a central role in poetry. On a straightforward level, you can picture in your head the literal images created by the words in the poem. Other examples of imagery that poets use are not so literal, and writers use them to communicate their ideas even more strikingly.

### Introduction

Poets make deliberate choices in the words, images and sounds they use, and they think carefully about the way they structure their poems. In this unit, you will learn how to comment on the effects of writers' choices and not simply list the devices they use. You should also be able to use with confidence a number of terms that are helpful when discussing poetry.

Poets deliberately choose the words they use, and it is part of your work as a student of literature to analyse carefully the effects created by those words. For example, in 'Ozymandias' (see Unit 4), Shelley uses **imagery** to create a number of meaningful pictures in your mind. As you read that poem, you can clearly imagine the legs of the statue still standing, the face shattered and half sunk in the ground, the ruler's frown and sneer, and so on. In 'Blackberry-Picking', the first poem of this unit, the poet helps you to see the vivid colours of the purple, red and green berries.



## 5.1 Exploring imagery and sound: 'Blackberry-Picking' by Seamus Heaney

Seamus Heaney (1939–2013) wrote our next poem. Winner of the 1995 Nobel Prize in Literature, he was a popular Irish poet whose early poems vividly capture his youth in rural Northern Ireland. The title of this particular poem, 'Blackberry-Picking', tells us what it is about. The poem describes a childhood pastime of collecting blackberries from the sort of thorny bush you can see in the photograph. The perspective is that of an adult looking back at, and reflecting on, his childhood experience.



Blackberries grow on thorny bushes.

### Blackberry-Picking

Late August, given heavy rain and sun  
 For a full week, the blackberries would ripen.  
 At first, just one, a glossy purple clot  
 Among others, red, green, hard as a knot.  
 You ate that first one and its flesh was sweet 5  
 Like thickened wine: summer's blood was in it  
 Leaving stains upon the tongue and lust<sup>1</sup> for  
 Picking. Then red ones inked up, and that hunger  
 Sent us out with milk-cans, pea-tins, jam-pots  
 Where briars scratched and wet grass bleached our boots. 10  
 Round hayfields, cornfields and potato-drills,  
 We trekked and picked until the cans were full,  
 Until the tinkling bottom had been covered  
 With green ones, and on top big dark blobs burned  
 Like a plate of eyes. Our hands were peppered 15  
 With thorn pricks, our palms sticky as Bluebeard's<sup>2</sup>.

We hoarded the fresh berries in the byre.  
 But when the bath was filled we found a fur,  
 A rat-grey fungus, glutting on our cache.  
 The juice was stinking too. Once off the bush 20  
 The fruit fermented, the sweet flesh would turn sour.  
 I always felt like crying. It wasn't fair  
 That all the lovely canfuls smelt of rot.  
 Each year I hoped they'd keep, knew they would not.

1 lust strong desire

2 Bluebeard a notorious murderer and pirate-type figure



**TIP**

You need to show detailed knowledge of the literary texts you study. Creating mind maps can help you to arrange visually the detail of the poem in a way that helps close study.



**KEY TERM**

**Simile:** where one thing is compared to another. It is easy to spot a simile, as they signal comparison by using the words 'like', 'as' or 'as if'.

In 'Blackberry-Picking', Heaney uses non-literal images: **similes**, metaphors and personification. He does this to make the experience he describes more vivid to the reader.

A simile is the comparison of one thing to another. In this poem, the flesh of the first berry is described in this way: 'its flesh was sweet / Like thickened wine'. The comparison with wine suggests the forbidden nature of eating the berries: perhaps this is something the children should not be doing. Your response to a poem involves looking closely at the choices of words made by poets, and considering their intended effects on the reader.

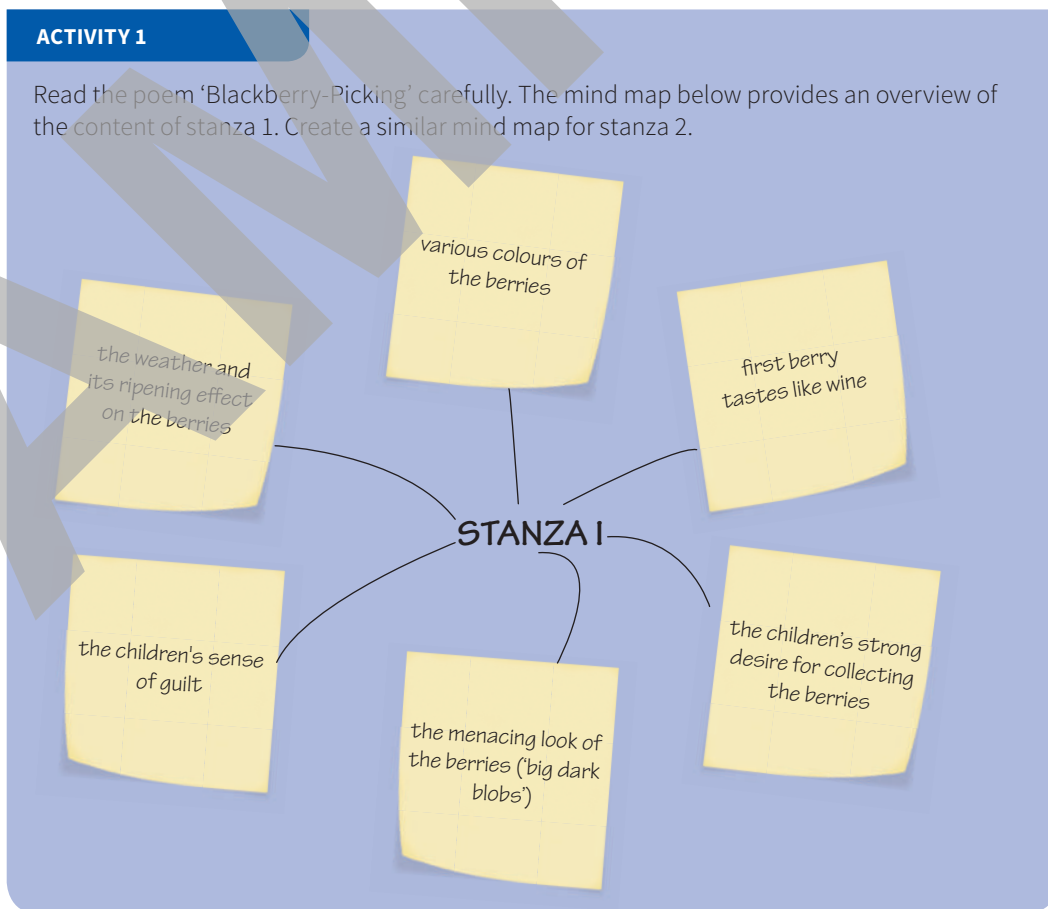
A metaphor is used to describe the first berry: 'a glossy purple clot'. A dictionary describes a 'clot' as 'a thick mass of coagulated blood'. Heaney has deliberately used this word to create a rather disturbing effect. Remember that this is the first berry the child bites into!

Personification is used in the description of the 'big dark blobs' which 'burned / Like a plate of eyes'.

It is not enough simply to identify devices such as these; you must say why you think Heaney has used these particular words in the poem, and what effects he creates.

**ACTIVITY 1**

Read the poem 'Blackberry-Picking' carefully. The mind map below provides an overview of the content of stanza 1. Create a similar mind map for stanza 2.



## ACTIVITY 2

Examples of imagery in stanza 1 of 'Blackberry-Picking' are listed below. In each case, say what type of imagery Heaney is using, and what effect he creates. Record your answers in a table like the one below.

Words	Type of imagery	Effect created
<i>glossy purple clot</i>		
<i>its flesh was sweet / Like thickened wine</i>		
<i>summer's blood ... Leaving stains upon the tongue</i>		
<i>red ones inked up</i>	metaphor	This conveys the vivid saturated red colour of the berries, similar to red ink. The berries have the power to stain, in the same way as ink.
<i>big dark blobs burned / Like a plate of eyes.</i>	personification and simile	

## ACTIVITY 3

As you read poems, you should be alert to the effects created by the sound of particular words, as well as the rhythm of particular lines. There may be something significant about:

- the sound of particular words and lines
- the length of words and lines.

Something unusual about the rhythm is always worthy of your attention. In such cases, the rhythm will clearly reinforce the meaning. Two common sound devices used by poets are alliteration and **onomatopoeia**.

Read the following two lines aloud, and answer the questions which follow.

*We **tr**ek**k**ed and **p**icked until the **c**ans were full,  
Until the **t**in**k**ling bottom had been **c**overed ...*

- What sound is suggested by the use of alliteration – the repetition of the 'k' sound (indicated in red)? How does this help to convey the experience being described?
- Which word in these lines provides a good example of onomatopoeia, and why?
- How does the rhythm of these lines capture the experience being described?

## TIP

As with imagery, you need to do more than merely spot and define sound devices such as alliteration and onomatopoeia. To write an effective essay, you need to explore:

- the effects that such devices create
- how they help to convey the meaning.

## KEY TERM

**Onomatopoeia:**  
a word which sounds like the thing it describes.

**ACTIVITY 4**

The poem is written from the point of view of an adult who remembers his childhood pastime of collecting berries. From stanza 2, write down those words you think capture most closely the voice of the child.

**ACTIVITY 5**

How does the description in lines 18–21 show the boy’s disappointment at what happens to the berries?

Write down the key words or phrases, and explain the effect they have on you.

**ACTIVITY 6**

The excitement of picking the berries (in stanza 1) gives way to the boy’s disappointment. He is upset at how quickly the excitement passed.

There are clues in stanza 1 that prepare the reader for the children’s disappointment as described in stanza 2. Write a paragraph, outlining what these clues are. You might begin your answer like this:

The first clue is the description of a berry as a ‘glossy purple clot’. The association of the word ‘clot’ with blood is a disturbing one because ...

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Romantic poets wrote about emotions and imagination, often drawing inspiration from nature, as Wordsworth does in ‘Daffodils’. The Romantic period largely coincides with Wordsworth’s life, from 1770 to 1850.

**5.2 Looking closely at the effects created by writers:  
‘Daffodils’ by William Wordsworth**

Most people have heard of William Wordsworth (1770–1850). Like Shelley, who wrote ‘Ozymandias’, Wordsworth was an English Romantic poet. The poem which follows is a classic Romantic portrayal of nature, celebrating the beauty and tranquillity in his vision of a multitude (a ‘crowd’) of daffodils. The deeper meaning of what this sight meant to Wordsworth is given in the poem’s final stanza.

**Daffodils**

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

5

Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way,  
They stretched in never-ending line

Along the margin of a bay: 10  
 Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
 Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they  
 Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:  
 A poet could not but be gay, 15  
 In such a jocund company:  
 I gazed – and gazed – but little thought  
 What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
 In vacant or in pensive mood, 20  
 They flash upon that inward eye  
 Which is the bliss of solitude;  
 And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
 And dances with the daffodils.



What aspects of Wordsworth's descriptions of daffodils can be seen in this photograph?

**ACTIVITY 1**

Read the poem 'Daffodils' carefully to yourself, emphasising the sounds and rhymes as you do so.

Using a dictionary, match the following words to their correct meaning in the poem.

<i>solitude</i>	<i>sprightly</i>	<i>jocund</i>	<i>bliss</i>	<i>milky way</i>	<i>vacant</i>	<i>pensive</i>
-----------------	------------------	---------------	--------------	------------------	---------------	----------------

Use a table like the one shown below for your answers.

Word	Correct meaning
solitude	being alone
	faint band of light making up the night sky, made up of stars
	perfect happiness
	thoughtful
	lively
	empty
	cheerful

**ACTIVITY 2**

The poem begins with a description of the daffodils. It ends with the poet reflecting on what the experience of seeing the daffodils means to him. Pinpoint the precise moment in the poem where you think the description gives way to reflection. Explain why you chose that moment.

**ACTIVITY 3**

Explore the effects of these images in the poem. Then write up your own comments in a table like this one.

Image	Effect
<i>I wandered lonely as a cloud / That floats on high o'er vales and hills</i>	
<i>a crowd, / A host, of golden daffodils</i>	
<i>Continuous as the stars that shine / And twinkle on the milky way</i>	This simile gives the impression that the daffodils are so plentiful – that they stretch as far as the eye can see. The words 'shine' and 'twinkle' show how bright and dazzling the daffodils appear to the poet.
<i>Tossing their heads in sprightly dance</i>	
<i>[the daffodils] Out-did the sparkling waves in glee</i>	

**KEY TERM**

**Assonance:** the repetition of vowel sounds in words which are placed close together. Remember that *alliteration* refers to the repetition of *consonant* sounds.

In your study of 'Blackberry-Picking', you have so far explored the effects of alliteration and onomatopoeia. Another sound device used by writers is **assonance**, which can be heard in the long 'o' sounds in the following line:

*A host, of golden daffodils.*

As you read this line, you can hear the repeated sound and it creates a sense of harmony. However, it is not so easy to establish a precise link between sound and meaning in this example. The best advice, therefore, is to focus on the meaning. There is no credit given in exams for making exaggerated or generalised claims about the sound devices poets use.

**TIP**

Effects created by sound will be easier to comment on in some examples than in others. In essays, it is sensible to focus on those examples where you have something useful to say about the way sound reinforces the meaning. Remember that there is no point in simply listing sound devices (e.g. that there is alliteration of the 'b' sound in the final two lines of stanza 1) without commenting on the specific effects these have.

**ACTIVITY 4**

Look at the following lines from 'Daffodils':

*Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.*

Write down examples of the following in these lines:

- alliteration
- assonance
- onomatopoeia.

For each example, comment on the effects Wordsworth creates.

**ACTIVITY 5**

The poem 'Daffodils' has a highly regular structure, with a regular **rhyme scheme**.

In each stanza, the first and third lines rhyme at the end, as do the second and fourth. The final two lines (fifth and sixth) also rhyme, giving a sense of completion to each stanza. Note that 'glee' and 'company' in stanza 3 are not full rhymes, unless you force the pronunciation of the second word. (Interestingly, in stanza 4, 'mood' and the final syllable of 'solitude' are not full rhymes for UK speakers, but are for US speakers of English.)

Which pair of rhyming lines do you think is most effective, and which pair least effective? Give reasons for your answers.

**KEY TERM**

**Rhyme scheme:** the pattern of rhymes at the end of lines of poetry.

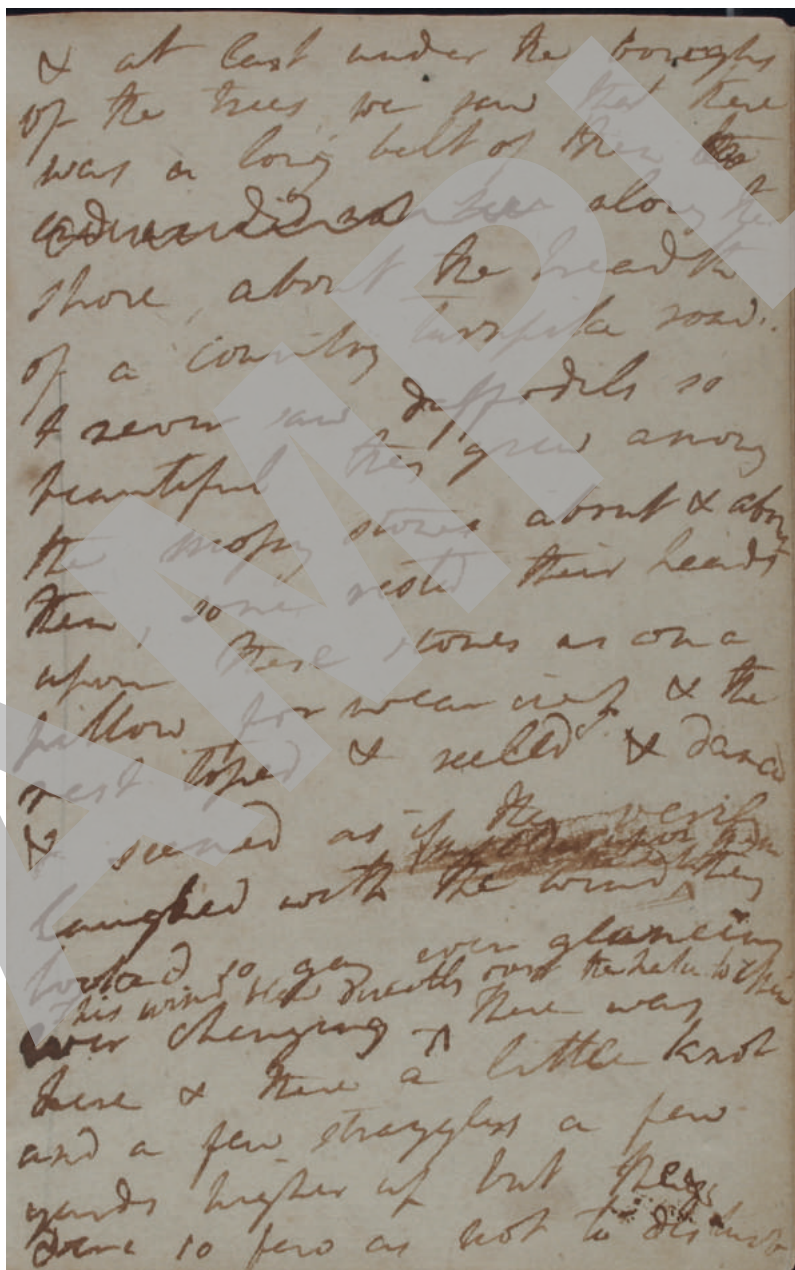
**TIP**

Comment on the rhyme scheme only if you have something useful to say. The rhyming of 'trees' and 'breeze' in stanza 1 of 'Daffodils', for example, may well conjure up the sound made by the 'fluttering' leaves. However, it is best to avoid generalisations such as: 'The stanza has an ABABCC rhyme scheme.' This sort of comment does not in itself really add to an appreciation of the poem.

## ACTIVITY 6

In order to consider the deeper meanings of the poem, explain why you think Wordsworth uses the following words:

- *wealth* (in line 18)
- *pensive mood* (in line 20)
- *that inward eye / Which is the bliss of solitude* (in lines 21–22).



Entry from Dorothy Wordsworth's diary, for 15 April 1802. Can you pick out any phrases that echo those in her brother William's poem 'Daffodils'?



### ●●● FURTHER READING

This extract is from the diary entry made by William's sister, Dorothy Wordsworth, on 15 April 1802. Part of this extract (from '& at last . . .') can be seen in the original diary in the photograph on the previous page.

*The wind was furious . . . the Lake was rough . . . When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow park we saw a few daffodils close to the water side, we fancied that the lake had floated the seeds ashore & that the little colony had so sprung up – But as we went along there were more & yet more & at last under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. I never saw daffodils so beautiful they grew among the mossy stones about & about them, some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness & the rest tossed & reeled & danced & seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the Lake, they looked so gay ever glancing ever changing.*

You can find more of Dorothy Wordsworth's diary on the internet.

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY 1

Romantic poets such as Wordsworth drew great inspiration from nature. Fellow poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge adopts an almost devout tone in his attitude towards nature in his poem 'Frost at Midnight'. In this poem, Coleridge imagines a world in which nature will be the best teacher for his young child. Search for a copy of the poem in your library or on the internet. Then, using the close reading skills you have developed so far, read the poem carefully. How do you think Coleridge portrays nature?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY 2

After working through the activities on Wordsworth's poem, look at the poem 'Miracle on St David's Day' written by Welsh poet Gillian Clarke (born 1937). You can find a copy of the poem on the poet's website. Then explore the connections between her poem and Wordsworth's poem 'Daffodils'.

## 5.3 Organising ideas in a sonnet: 'When Forty Winters Shall Besiege Thy Brow' by William Shakespeare

The next poem is by a writer who needs little introduction. Perhaps you know William Shakespeare (1564–1616) more as a writer of plays rather than as a poet. The following poem is the second of 154 sonnets he wrote about love, beauty and the passage of time. There has been much speculation about the identity of the person being addressed; the sonnets were dedicated to 'W.H.', possibly William Herbert (the Earl of Pembroke). But who the actual person was is less important than how Shakespeare conveys universal ideas about the strength of one person's love for another.

Read the sonnet carefully. Two archaic words and one old-fashioned phrase are explained in the margin, but these are probably not the only words that you will find difficult, at least on a first reading.

The form of the poem is a Shakespearean sonnet, which has 14 lines: three **quatrains** (each of four lines), ending with a rhyming couplet (two lines), which gives a sense of completeness to the poem. The sonnet form shows how important structure is to poets in developing and organising their ideas.



### LINK

The sonnet is a very traditional type of poem in its use of structure and rhyme. Compare this rigid format with the freer style of Walt Whitman's poem later in this unit.



### KEY TERM

**Quatrain:** a stanza of four lines, usually containing a separate focus. Quatrains often have an alternating rhyme scheme: e.g. listen to the words 'brow' and 'now' at the ends of lines 1 and 3 in this sonnet by Shakespeare.

**KEY TERM**

**Turning-point:** a twist that signals a change in direction or a change in tone in a poem. These will often provide a useful starting-point for your close exploration of a poem's meaning and effects.

**LINK**

There are two types of sonnet: the 'Shakespearean' and the 'Petrarchan' (named after the ancient Roman poet Petrarch). Look again at 'Ozymandias' in Unit 4 for an example of a Petrarchan sonnet. There are two main sections to a Petrarchan sonnet:

- 1 the *octave* (of eight lines)
- 2 the *sestet* (six lines).

Re-read 'Ozymandias' to see how Shelley has used the Petrarchan sonnet to organise his ideas. You will notice that the ninth line signals a shift in direction, or a **turning-point**.

**When Forty Winters Shall Besiege Thy Brow**

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,  
 And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,  
 Thy youth's proud livery so gazed on now,  
 Will be a tottered<sup>1</sup> weed of small worth held:  
 Then, being asked where all thy beauty lies,  
 Where all the treasure of thy lusty days,  
 To say within thine own deep-sunken eyes  
 Were an<sup>2</sup> all-eating shame, and thriftless<sup>3</sup> praise.  
 How much more praise deserved thy beauty's use  
 If thou couldst answer 'This fair child of mine  
 Shall sum my count and make my old excuse,'  
 Proving his beauty by succession thine.

5

10

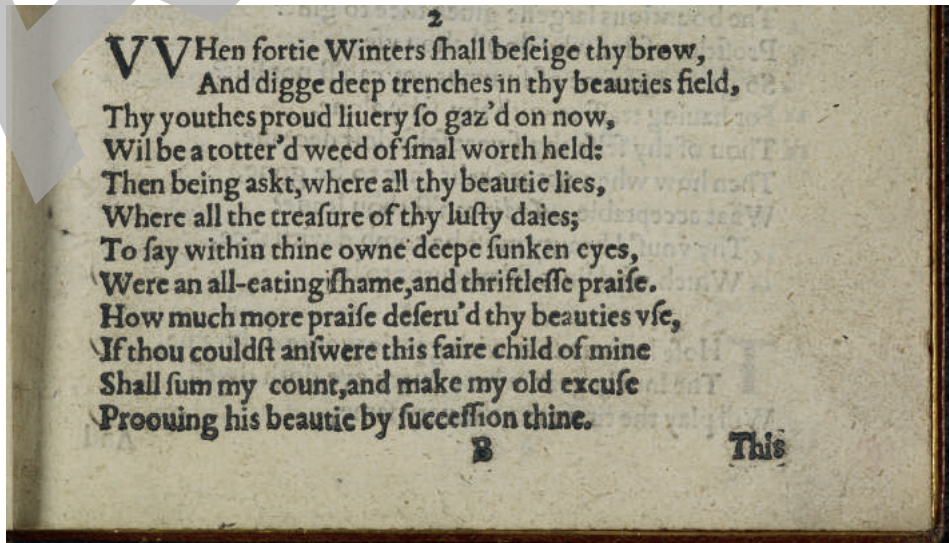
This were to be new made when thou art old,  
 And see thy blood warm when thou feel'st it cold.

1 **tottered** tattered, or old and worn

2 **Were an** Would be

3 **thriftless** worthless, or useless

**TIP**  
 When reading any text for the first time, note your first impressions. Look at particular words or phrases and listen to particular sounds that you find striking.



What do you notice about the spellings and the appearance of the letter 'S' in this early printed version of this sonnet?

The following activities will help you to organise a response to the language and structure of the poem.

### ACTIVITY 1

Print a copy of the poem 'When Forty Winters Shall Besiege Thy Brow' from the internet. Then draw a line after each of the three quatrains: that is, after lines 4, 8 and 12. This will help you to see clearly the poem's structure.

Write a summary of the content of:

- each quatrain
- the rhyming couplet.

### ACTIVITY 2

Look at each quatrain of the sonnet 'When Forty Winters Shall Besiege Thy Brow' in turn, and, on a copy of the poem, highlight the words and phrases you find striking. Annotate each of these by commenting on the effects each word or phrase creates.

For the first quatrain, your annotation might look like this:

'trenches' – metaphorically the wrinkles that cut into the face and take away its youthful beauty

'dig' makes it seem like a deliberate, destructive activity

'besiege' personifies a sustained battle against a human face, as if it is forced to surrender to the devastation caused by time

When forty winters shall **besiege** thy brow,  
And **dig deep trenches** in thy beauty's field,  
Thy youth's proud **livery** so **gazed on** now  
Will be a **tattered weed** of small worth held:

this continues the 'livery' metaphor in a shocking way; in time, the livery will become old and worn, its pride vanished

the metaphor 'livery' conveys the idea that youth has a particular uniform which attracts admiring gazes; 'gazed' creates the impression of being looked at intently

### ACTIVITY 3

Rhyming couplets give a sense of completion to a sonnet. How effective do you find lines 13–14 as a conclusion to the poem? Write your answer in no more than two sentences.

Rhyme can create a kind of musical effect as you read, and gives emphasis to the words that rhyme. Rhyme can also link words by their sounds to create certain effects. Write a paragraph in which you explore two rhymes from this sonnet that you find most effective, and explain your reasons for choosing them.

**KEY TERMS**

**Metre:** the rhythm of the poem.

**Iambic pentameter:** a line of poetry (or verse in plays such as those written by Shakespeare) with ten syllables arranged in five 'feet', each containing a short and then a long syllable. An iambic pentameter has a traditional and rigid metre. Take as an example the first line of Shakespeare's sonnet in the previous section of this unit: 'When forty winters shall besiege thy brow'.

**5.4 Exploring free verse:  
'Come Up from the Fields Father' by Walt Whitman**



A portrait of a young soldier in the American Civil War.

Walt Whitman (1819–1892) was an American poet whose poetry broke through traditional boundaries. If you look below at the poem we will be exploring, you can see that both stanzas and individual lines are of varying lengths. Whitman's poem is written in free verse, which has irregular lines and lacks a regular **metre** (such as the sonnet's **iambic pentameter**). In this poem, you can see at a glance that Whitman exercises total freedom in deciding how long his lines and stanzas will be. It is important to remember that whether the verse is free or more rigidly traditional, it is used to reinforce the meaning.

The poem is the sad story of a mother receiving the news of her son's death in battle in the American Civil War (1861–1865). The grief of one family in this poem is typical of the grief of all families who lost sons in battle.

**Come Up from the Fields Father**

*Stanza 1* Come up from the fields father, here's a letter from our Pete,  
And come to the front door mother, here's a letter from thy  
dear son.

*Stanza 2* Lo, 'tis autumn,  
Lo, where the trees, deeper green, yellower and redder,  
Cool and sweeten Ohio's villages with leaves fluttering in the 5  
moderate wind,

*Stanza 3* Where apples ripe in the orchards hang and grapes on the  
trellis'd vines<sup>1</sup>,  
(Smell you the smell of the grapes on the vines?  
Smell you the buckwheat<sup>2</sup> where the bees were lately buzzing?)  
Above all, lo, the sky so calm, so transparent after the rain,  
and with wondrous clouds,  
Below too, all calm, all vital and beautiful, and the farm 10  
 prospers well.

1 **trellis'd vines** climbing plants held up by a wooden support

2 **buckwheat** plant producing starchy seeds

*Stanza 4* Down in the fields all prospers well,  
But now from the fields come father, come at the daughter's call,  
And come to the entry mother, to the front door come right away.

*Stanza 5* Fast as she can she hurries, something ominous<sup>3</sup>, her steps  
trembling,  
She does not tarry to smooth her hair nor adjust her cap. 15

*Stanza 6* Open the envelope quickly,  
O this is not our son's writing, yet his name is sign'd,  
O a strange hand writes for our dear son, O stricken  
mother's soul!

*Stanza 7* All swims before her eyes, flashes with black, she catches the  
main words only,  
Sentences broken, *gunshot wound in the breast, cavalry* 20  
*skirmish<sup>4</sup>, taken to hospital,*  
*At present low, but will soon be better.*

*Stanza 8* Ah now the single figure to me,  
Amid all teeming<sup>5</sup> and wealthy Ohio with all its cities and  
farms,  
Sickly white in the face and dull in the head, very faint,  
By the jamb of a door leans. 25

*Stanza 9* *Grieve not so, dear mother,* (the just-grown daughter speaks  
through her sobs,  
The little sisters huddle around speechless and dismay'd,)  
*See, dearest mother, the letter says Pete will soon be better.*

*Stanza 10* Alas poor boy, he will never be better, (nor may-be needs  
to be better, that brave and simple soul,)  
While they stand at home at the door he is dead already, 30  
The only son is dead.

3 ominous bringing bad news

4 cavalry skirmish a minor  
fight on horseback

5 teeming swarming, packed

*Stanza 11* But the mother needs to be better,  
 She with thin form presently drest in black,  
 By day her meals untouch'd, then at night fitfully sleeping,  
 often waking,  
 In the midnight waking, weeping, longing with one deep  
 longing,  
 O that she might withdraw unnoticed, silent from life escape 35  
 and withdraw,  
 To follow, to seek, to be with her dear dead son.

**TIP**

There is no point in copying out large chunks of the text. Quote only the words that help you to make your points clearly and precisely.

**ACTIVITY 1**

Read the poem 'Come Up from the Fields Father' carefully. Sum up in 11 concise sentences (one for each stanza) the 'story' of the poem.

**ACTIVITY 2**

How does the way in which the poem is structured contribute to its dramatic impact? Use evidence from the poem to support your views.

**ACTIVITY 3**

The mood of the first three stanzas is calm. In stanza 4, the mother comes to the front door 'right away', and a sense of urgency is created. Re-read from stanza 6 to the end of the poem. How would you describe the changing mood? Refer to specific lines to support your answer.

**ACTIVITY 4**

In free verse, poets have considerable flexibility. Their lines can be as long or as short as they need them to be in order to convey their ideas. What effect do you think is created by how long or how short the following lines from this poem are?

- a *Above all, lo, the sky so calm, so transparent after the rain, and with wondrous clouds*
- b *Open the envelope quickly*

**ACTIVITY 5**

Select one short line and one long line from the poem (though not the ones in Activity 4). Then comment on the effects created by:

- a the length of the line
- b its position in the overall poem.

**ACTIVITY 6**

In lines 4–11, what picture is depicted of the life on the farm? Look carefully at the words, and write two paragraphs in which you comment on:

- a words which appeal to the senses
- b words which use sound to create strong effects.

**ACTIVITY 7**

In lines 16–28, explore the ways in which Whitman conveys the death of the son and the sadness it brings.

Write a paragraph, using brief quotations to support your views.

**ACTIVITY 8**

What does Whitman make you feel for the mother in the final stanza? Write a paragraph in which you refer closely to his use of language and structure within this stanza.

### 5.5 Exploring the use of dialogue in poetry: 'Telephone Conversation' by Wole Soyinka

Born in Nigeria in 1934, Wole Soyinka is a playwright and poet who received the 1986 Nobel Prize in Literature. After studying in Nigeria, he lived for some time in the UK. In the following poem, we hear the **narrator's** voice recounting the circumstances of a telephone conversation between him and a woman who rents out property. The poem explores the prejudice sometimes encountered by immigrants in England in the 1960s.



Old-fashioned telephone booths can still be found in many places in Britain.

**KEY TERM**

**Narrator:** the person who tells the story. What happens is communicated through their words.

1 **red booth** old-fashioned English public telephone booth

2 **pillar-box** postbox

3 **sepia** light brown

4 **brunette** person with brown hair

5 **peroxide** a bleach used to dye hair blonde

6 **raven black** shiny black like a raven

### Telephone Conversation

The price seemed reasonable, location  
 Indifferent. The landlady swore she lived  
 Off premises. Nothing remained  
 But self-confession. ‘Madam,’ I warned,  
 ‘I hate a wasted journey – I am African.’ 5  
 Silence. Silenced transmission of  
 Pressurized good-breeding. Voice, when it came,  
 Lipstick coated, long gold-rolled  
 Cigarette-holder pipped. Caught I was, foully.  
 ‘HOW DARK?’ . . . I had not misheard . . . ‘ARE YOU LIGHT 10  
 OR VERY DARK? Button B. Button A. Stench  
 Of rancid breath of public hide-and-speak.  
 Red booth<sup>1</sup>. Red pillar-box<sup>2</sup>. Red double-tiered  
 Omnibus squelching tar. It *was* real! Shamed  
 By ill-mannered silence, surrender 15  
 Pushed dumbfounded to beg simplification.  
 Considerate she was, varying the emphasis –  
 ‘ARE YOU DARK? OR VERY LIGHT?’ Revelation came.  
 ‘You mean – like plain or milk chocolate?’  
 Her assent was clinical, crushing in its light 20  
 Impersonality. Rapidly, wave-length adjusted,  
 I chose. ‘West African sepia<sup>3</sup>’ – and as afterthought,  
 ‘Down in my passport.’ Silence for spectroscopic  
 Flight of fancy, till truthfulness clangd her accent  
 Hard on the mouthpiece. ‘WHAT’S THAT?’ conceding 25  
 ‘DON’T KNOW WHAT THAT IS.’ ‘Like brunette<sup>4</sup>.’  
 ‘THAT’S DARK, ISN’T IT?’ ‘Not altogether.  
 Facially, I am brunette, but, madam, you should see  
 The rest of me. Palm of my hand, soles of my feet  
 Are a peroxide<sup>5</sup> blond. Friction, caused – 30  
 Foolishly, madam – by sitting down, has turned  
 My bottom raven black<sup>6</sup> – One moment, madam! – sensing  
 Her receiver rearing on the thunderclap  
 About my ears – ‘Madam,’ I pleaded, ‘wouldn’t you rather  
 See for yourself?’ 35



## ACTIVITY 1

Read the poem 'Telephone Conversation' carefully. Write down the dialogue from the poem in the form of a drama script. You should concentrate mainly on the words spoken by the man and the woman. You could set lines out like this:

<b>MAN:</b>	Madam, I hate a wasted journey – I am African. [Silence.]
<b>WOMAN:</b>	How dark ...? Are you light or very dark?

In pairs, read through your drama script, making sure you bring to life the characters of both the man and the woman. In your reading, capture as clearly as you can an appropriate **tone** of voice for both the man and the woman. The tone for each character changes over the course of the conversation. Your reading should reflect this.

## KEY TERMS

**Tone:** conveyed in a poem by the poet's deliberate choice of words. Think of tone as being the tone of voice in which a particular word or line might be spoken. The tone can, of course, change during a poem. In your essays you should be able to discuss where, and why, such changes in tone occur.

**Enjambment:** occurs where lines run on without punctuation and without a break in the meaning.

## ACTIVITY 2

Annotate a copy of the poem to show how Soyinka portrays the unpleasant character of the woman. Refer to:

- the words she speaks, and her tone of voice
- the words used by the speaker to describe her.

## ACTIVITY 3

**Enjambment** is used several times in the poem. Explain what effects are created by its use in:

- line 11
- line 14.



## LINK

Enjambment at the end of stanzas is generally more significant than elsewhere in a poem. Look at stanzas 1 and 4 in Ted Hughes's poem 'Wind' in Unit 6 for a good example of how enjambment enhances the content of the poem.



## TIP

Avoid comments on enjambment that say little more than 'The enjambment makes the lines flow.' This may or may not be true, but more precise comments are required about what makes specific examples of enjambment so effective.

## ACTIVITY 4

In what ways does Soyinka use punctuation to powerful effect in the following lines?

- 'HOW DARK?' ... I had not misheard ... 'ARE YOU LIGHT'
- Red booth. Red pillar-box. Red double-tiered / Omnibus squelching tar. It was real!
- 'ARE YOU DARK? OR VERY LIGHT?' Revelation came.

## ACTIVITY 5

How effective do you find the structure of the poem in reinforcing its content? Your responses to Activities 1–4 will help you answer this question.

## Check your progress

### Exploring language and structure

When exploring language and structure as you study a poem, remember to consider the key areas listed below. It is not possible to impose an order for you to follow, as readers respond to poems in different ways.

You could use the following active learning techniques to identify and comment on key aspects of language and structure in the poems you are studying:

- annotation
- mind maps
- lists.

Areas to consider	Comment on the effects of ...
Words appealing to senses	words appealing to sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell
Imagery	similes and metaphors
	personification
Sound	alliteration
	assonance
	onomatopoeia
	rhyme
	rhythm
Tone	the tone of any 'voice' or 'voices' in the poem shifts in tone
Structure	organisation of content in stanzas / stages of the poem use of traditional (e.g. sonnet) or other forms (e.g. free verse)

#### ACTIVITY

Choose one of the poems in your poetry set text (a different one from the one you selected at the end of Unit 4). Read a copy of the poem carefully, and annotate as follows:

- Mark and number each clearly different section of the poem. Note that a new section may begin mid-line. Then at the top or bottom of the page write one concise sentence on what each section is about.
- Underline **six** particularly striking words or phrases, and comment in the margin on the effects they create.

### Self-evaluation

Reflect on the skills below and indicate your confidence level between 1 and 5. If needed, revisit the section listed in the 'Look again' column. Come back to this list later in your course. Has your confidence grown?

Skill	Confidence level	Look again
I can identify imagery and comment on the effects it creates.		5.1
I can identify sound devices and comment on the effects they create.		5.2
I can confidently explain how structure reinforces meanings.		5.3
I can distinguish between traditional and less traditional poetic forms.		5.4
I practise reading poems aloud to appreciate poets' use of tone.		5.5

SAMPLE

# Cambridge IGCSE® and O Level Literature in English Coursebook Second edition Russell Carey

Analyse how Carol Ann Duffy uses structure to convey meaning in 'Row', explore Anita Desai's first person narratives and engage with characters in Tennessee Williams' play *The Glass Menagerie*. This coursebook contains a range of poetry, prose and drama from around the world to appeal to international students.

In keeping with the spirit of the Cambridge IGCSE and O Level, the book takes an active approach to learning and helps students develop informed personal responses based on close textual study.

## Key features:

- Structured activities that build key skills in responding to literature
- Advice on developing effective writing skills
- Guidance for answering questions on poetry, prose and drama
- Support with tackling critical essay questions and unseen texts
- Helpful revision strategies and tips for preparing coursework

## Also available:

Workbook	978-1-108-43995-4
Cambridge Elevate Teacher's Resource	978-1-108-45733-0
<i>Songs of Ourselves</i> anthology vol. 1	978-1-108-46226-6
<i>Songs of Ourselves</i> anthology vol. 2	978-1-108-46228-0
<i>Stories of Ourselves</i> anthology vol. 1	978-1-108-46229-7
<i>Stories of Ourselves</i> anthology vol. 2	978-1-108-43619-9



## Completely Cambridge

Cambridge University Press works with Cambridge Assessment International Education and experienced authors to produce high-quality endorsed textbooks and digital resources that support Cambridge teachers and encourage Cambridge learners worldwide.

To find out more about Cambridge University Press visit [cambridge.org/cambridge-international](http://cambridge.org/cambridge-international)



This resource is endorsed by  
Cambridge Assessment International Education

- ✓ Supports the full Cambridge IGCSE, IGCSE (9-1) and O Level Literature in English syllabuses (0475/0992/2010), and IGCSE World Literature (0408), for examination from 2020.
- ✓ Please note, Cambridge International do not endorse materials for Literature in English which include coverage of our set texts.
- ✓ Has passed Cambridge International's rigorous quality-assurance process
- ✓ Developed by subject experts
- ✓ For Cambridge schools worldwide



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Achievement  
through  
excellence

ISBN 978-1-108-43991-6



9 781108 439916 >