

Introduction - Drills for Skills series - Unseen Poetry

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

The questions give students practice in the following areas:

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

Instructions for students

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

Handy Hints - Literary Language/Poetic Devices

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

Exercise 4

Read the poem and answer the questions in complete sentences.

Blue-Butterfly Day

Poem Hint

Think about contrasts - life and death, new and old

It is blue-butterfly day here in spring,
And with these sky-flakes down in flurry on flurry
There is more unmixed color on the wing
Than flowers will show for days unless they hurry.
But these are flowers that fly and all but sing:
And now from having given out desire
They lie on sear in the wind and cling
When wheels have freshly sliced the April mire.

Robert Lee Frost

Poem Hint

blue butterflies only live
for a few days

Vocabulary Hint

mire: soft and slushy
ground from the snow

Exercise 4 - questions

What metaphor is used in line 2 of the first stanza? What is the poet referring to?

Why do the butterflies have to hurry? Think about how this relates to a butterfly's short lifespan.

What is the poet's attitude to the blue butterflies? How does he compare them to flowers?

What is the weather like in the poem? What clues tell you? (there are two)

Why do the butterflies lie? (two)

How does the mood of the poem change in the last stanza?

What is the poet's message in the poem? Think about nature and life and the contrasts between life and death.

SAMPLE

Exercise 4 - answers

What metaphor is used in line 2 of the first stanza? What is the poet referring to?

The metaphor is 'sky-flakes' and is used to refer to snow/butterflies. (accept one or both answer/s)

Why do the butterflies have to hurry? Think about how this relates to a butterfly's short lifespan.

They have to hurry because they only live for a few days and soon will be on the ground in the snow.

What is the poet's attitude to the blue butterflies? How does he compare them to flowers?

He thinks the butterflies are more beautiful than flowers because they are colourful like flowers but can fly too/The poet admires the butterflies even more than flowers because they are colourful and can fly. (accept any similar answer)

What is the weather like in the poem? What clues tell you? (there are two)

It is snowy/snowing. The clues are 'sky flakes' and 'mire'.

Why do the butterflies lie exposed?

They are dead

How does the mood of the poem change in the last stanza?

It changes from a happy/positive mood focusing on the butterflies to a sad/negative mood focussing on the end of their lives, the snow no longer fresh on the ground but dirty with wheel tracks. (accept any similar answer)

What is the poet's message in the poem? Think about nature and life and the contrasts between life and death.

The poet's message is that the beauty of nature is short-lived/does not last long. (accept any similar answer regarding how beauty in nature does not last)