



**English
Junior Certificate
Higher Level**

**Past Exam Questions on
Unseen Poetry**

Q1 & 2 Section 2 2013 Paper 2

Read the following poem, *To a Daughter Leaving Home* by Linda Pastan and then answer the questions which follow.

To a Daughter Leaving Home

When I taught you
at eight to ride
a bicycle, loping along
beside you
as you wobbled away
on two round wheels,
my own mouth rounding
in surprise when you pulled
ahead down the curved
path of the park,
I kept waiting
for the thud
of your crash as I
sprinted to catch up,
while you grew
smaller, more breakable
with distance,
pumping, pumping
for your life, screaming
with laughter,
the hair flapping
behind you like a
handkerchief waving
goodbye.



Answer **QUESTION ONE** and **QUESTION TWO**

QUESTION ONE

(30)

Answer the following three questions. Each question is worth 10 marks.

1. What impression do you get of the parent who features in this poem? Support your answer with reference to the poem. (10)
2. Do you think the title, *To A Daughter Leaving Home*, is a surprising one for this poem? Explain your answer with reference to the poem. (10)
3. Do you like Linda Pastan's style of writing in this poem? Give reasons for your answer. (10)

QUESTION TWO

(30)

Answer **EITHER 1 OR 2** which follow.

N.B. In answering you may **NOT** use the poem given on this paper. You must give the title of any poem and the name of any poet you refer to in your answer.

1. You have been invited to contribute to a radio programme. The programme's topic is:

Why young people should read poetry.

Write the text of the talk you would give. Support your views with detailed reference to two of the poems that you have studied.

(30)

Q1 Section 2 2012 Paper 2

Read the following extract from Vernon Scannell's poem, *First Fight*, and answer the questions which follow.

Slip in the gumshield
Bite on it hard,
Keep him off with your left,
Never drop your guard.
Try a left hook,
But he crosses with a right
Smack on your jaw
And Guy Fawkes' Night
Flashes and dazzles
Inside your skull,
Your knees go bandy
And you almost fall.
Keep the left jabbing,
Move around the ring,
Don't let him catch you with
Another hook or swing.
Keep your left working,
Keep it up high,
Stab it out straight and hard,
Again – above the eye.
Sweat in the nostrils,
But nothing now of fear,
You're moving smooth and confident
In comfortable gear.
Jab with the left again,
Quickly move away;
Feint and stab another in,
See him duck and sway.
Now for the pay-off punch,
Smash it hard inside;
It thuds against his jaw, he falls,
Limbs spread wide.
And suddenly you hear the roar,
Hoarse music of the crowd,
Voicing your hot ecstasy,
Triumphant, male and proud.

Now, in the sleepless darkness of his room
The Boy, in bed, remembers. Suddenly
The victory tastes sour. The man he fought
Was not a thing, as lifeless as a broom,
He was a man who hoped and trembled too;
What of him now? What was *he* going through?
And then the Boy bites hard on resolution:
Fighters can't pack pity with their gear.
And yet a bitter taste stays with the notion;
He's forced to swallow down one treacherous tear.
But that's the last. He is a boy no longer;
He is a man, a fighter, such as jeer
At those who make salt beads with melting eyes,
Whatever may cry out, is hurt, or dies.



Answer **QUESTION ONE** and **QUESTION TWO**

QUESTION ONE

(30)

Answer two of the following questions. Each question is worth 15 marks.

1. What do you learn about the boxer from your reading of the first part of this poem (Lines 1 – 36)? Explain your answer with reference to the poem.
2. How has the boy been affected by his experience of the fight? Explain your answer with reference to the last fourteen lines of the poem.
3. Comment on the poet's use of language in this poem.

Q1 Section 2 2011 Paper 2

Read the following poem, *Mrs Reece Laughs* by Martin Armstrong and answer the questions which follow.

Mrs Reece Laughs

Laughter, with us, is no great undertaking,
A sudden wave that breaks and dies in breaking.
Laughter, with Mrs Reece is much less simple:
It germinates, it spreads, dimple by dimple,
From small beginnings, things of easy girth,
To formidable redundancies of mirth.
Clusters of subterranean chuckles rise
And presently the circles of her eyes
Close into slits and all the woman heaves
As a great elm with all its mounds of leaves
Wallows before the storm. From hidden sources
A mustering of blind volcanic forces
Takes her and shakes her till she sobs and gapes.
Then all that load of bottled mirth escapes
In one wild crow, a lifting of huge hands,
And creaking stays*, a visage* that expands
In scarlet ridge and furrow. Thence collapse,
A hanging head, a feeble hand that flaps
An apron-end to stir an air and waft
A streaming face. And Mrs Reece has laughed.



* Stays – a type of corset, a female under-garment

* Visage - face

Answer **QUESTION ONE** and **QUESTION TWO**

QUESTION ONE

(30)

Answer the following **three** questions. Each question is worth 10 marks.

1. What is the difference between Mrs Reece's laughter and other people's laughter according to the poet, Martin Armstrong?
2. What impression of Mrs Reece do you form from reading this poem? Support your answer with reference to the poem.
3. How does the poet, Martin Armstrong, capture the extraordinary nature of Mrs Reece's laughter in this poem? Explain your answer with reference to the poem.

Q1 Section 2 2010 Paper 2

Read the following poem by Roger McGough and answer the questions which follow.

Cinders

After the pantomime, carrying you back to the car
On the coldest night of the year
My coat, black leather, cracking in the wind.

Through the darkness we are guided by a star
It is the one the Good Fairy gave you
You clutch it tightly, your magic wand.

And I clutch you tightly for fear you blow away
For fear you grow up too soon and - suddenly,
I almost slip, so take it steady down the hill.

Hunched against the wind and hobbling
I could be mistaken for your grandfather
And sensing this, I hold you tighter still.

Knowing that I will never see you dressed for the Ball
Be on hand to warn you against Prince Charmings
And the happy ever afters of pantomime.

On reaching the car I put you into the baby seat
And fumble with straps I have yet to master
Thinking, if only there were more time. More time.

You are crying now. Where is your wand?
Oh no. I can't face going back for it
Let some kid find it in tomorrow's snow.

Waiting in the wings, the witching hour.
Already the car is changing. Smells sweet
Of ripening seed. We must go. Must go.

Roger McGough



Roger McGough

Answer **QUESTION ONE** and **QUESTION TWO**

QUESTION ONE

(30)

Answer two of the following questions. Each question is worth 15 marks.

1. From your reading of the poem what do you learn about the relationship between the poet and his child? Base your answer on evidence from the poem.
2. Do you think the poet captures the scene well in this poem? Support your answer with reference to the poem.
3. Do you think this poem is sad or happy or a mixture of both? Explain your answer with reference to the poem.

Q1 Section 2 2009 Paper 2

Read the following poem by Pakistani poet, Imtiaz Dharker, in which she celebrates the importance of water to a community, and answer the questions which follow.

Blessing

The skin cracks like a pod.
There never is enough water.

Imagine the drip of it,
the small splash, echo
in a tin mug,
the voice of a kindly god.

Sometimes, the sudden rush
of fortune. The municipal*pipe bursts,
silver crashes to the ground
and the flow has found
a roar of tongues. From the huts,
a congregation: every man woman
child for streets around
butts in, with pots,
brass, copper, aluminium,
plastic buckets,
frantic hands,

and naked children
screaming in the liquid sun,
their highlights polished to perfection,
flashing light,
as the blessing sings
over their small bones.

Imtiaz Dharker



*Municipal: Provided by the local council

Answer **QUESTION ONE** and **QUESTION TWO**

QUESTION ONE

(30)

Answer any two of the following questions. Each question is worth 15 marks.

1. From your reading of this poem what do you learn about the people in it and the place where it is set? Support your answer with reference to the poem.
2. How does the poet convey a sense of excitement about the water in the poem?
3. Choose two of your favourite images relating to sound from this poem. Explain why you like these images.

Q1 Section 2 2008 Paper 2

Read the following poem by *Ted Hughes* and answer the questions which follow.

There Came a Day

There came a day that caught the summer
Wrung its neck
Plucked it
And ate it.

Now what shall I do with the trees?
The day said, the day said.
Strip them bare, strip them bare.
Let's see what is really there.

And what shall I do with the sun?
The day said, the day said.
Roll him away till he's cold and small.
He'll come back rested if he comes back at all.

And what shall I do with the birds?
The day said, the day said.
The birds I've frightened, let them flit,
I'll hang out pork for the brave tomtit.

And what shall I do with the seed?
The day said, the day said.
Bury it deep, see what it's worth.
See if it can stand the earth.

What shall I do with the people?
The day said, the day said.
Stuff them with apple and blackberry pie –
They'll love me then till the day they die.

There came this day and he was autumn.
His mouth was wide
And red as a sunset.
His tail was an icicle.



Answer **QUESTION ONE** and **QUESTION TWO** (30)

QUESTION ONE

Answer (a), (b) and (c) below.

- (a) At what time of year is this poem set? Give a reason for your answer. (5)
- (b) This poem has some striking images. Choose two images which appeal to you and explain why you think they are effective. Refer to the poem in support of your answer. (10)
- (c) Choose any other feature of the poem (apart from imagery) which appealed to you and explain why it appealed to you. You might consider one of the following: the language, the structure, the mood, the tone etc. (15)

Q1 Section 2 2007 Paper 2

Read the following poem and answer the questions which follow.

The Boy Who Nearly Won the TEXACO Art Competition *For Ted Hughes*

he took a large sheet
of white paper and on this
he made the world an African world
of flat topped trees and dried grasses
and he painted an elephant in the middle
and a lion with a big mane and several giraffes
stood over the elephant and some small animals to fill
in the gaps he worked all day had a bath this was Saturday

on Sunday he put six jackals
in the world and a great big snake
and buzzards in the sky and tickbirds
on the elephants back he drew down blue
from the sky to make a river and got the elephants
legs all wet and smudged and one of the jackals got drowned
he put red flowers in the front of the picture and daffodils in the bottom corners
and his dog major chewing a bone and mrs murphys two cats tom and jerry
and milo the milkman with a cigarette in the corner of his mouth
and his merveille dairy float pulled by his wonder horse trigger
that would walk when he said click click and the holy family
in the top right hand corner with the donkey and the cow
and the sheep and baby jesus and got the 40A bus
on Monday morning in to abbey street to hand
it in and the man on the door said
that's a sure winner

Joe Kane

Answer **QUESTION ONE** and **QUESTION TWO**

QUESTION ONE

(30)

Answer any TWO of the following questions. Each question is worth 15 marks.

1. What are your impressions of the boy in this poem? Support your answer with reference to the poem.
2. This poem has been described as “the whoosh of the imagination at work”. Do you agree? Base your answer on evidence from the poem.
3. Choose any two features of this poem which really appeal to you. Explain your choice.

Q1 Section 2 2005 Paper 2

Read the following poem (in edited form) and answer the questions which follow.

FIFTEEN

South of the Bridge on Seventeenth
I found, one summer day,
a motorcycle with engine running
as it lay on its side, ticking over
slowly in the high grass. I was fifteen.

I admired all that pulsing gleam, the
shiny flanks, the shy headlights,
grass-fringed where it lay; I led it gently
to the road and stood with that
companion, ready and friendly. I was fifteen.

We could find the end of a road, meet
the sky on out Seventeenth. I thought about
hills, and patting the handle got back a
confident response. On the bridge we indulged
a forward feeling, a tremble. I was fifteen.

Thinking, back farther in the grass I found
the owner, just coming to, where he had flipped
over the rail. He had blood on his hand, was pale –
I helped him walk to his machine. He ran his hand
over it, called me good man, roared away.

I stood there, fifteen.

William Stafford

Answer **QUESTION ONE** and **QUESTION TWO**

QUESTION ONE

(30)

Answer the following questions. Each question is worth 10 marks.

1. How does the poet give the impression that the motorcycle is a living creature?
Give reasons for your answer with reference to the poem.
2. The fifth stanza consists of one line only: "I stood there, fifteen."
Why do you think the poet has set this stanza apart from the rest of the poem?
Give reasons for your answer with reference to the poem.
3. Do you think *Fifteen* is a good poem?
Give reasons for your answer with close reference to the poem.