Unseen Poetry
Revision of Unseen Poetry
Agenda

• Exam Question on Unseen Poetry
• Revision of Unseen Poetry
• Purpose of Analysis: Visual Imagery
• Form, structure, diction, words, imagery
• Unseen Poetry Literary Terms, Techniques and Strategies
Unseen Poetry

• Unseen Poetry (Paper 1)
  – Choose between Unseen Poetry or Unseen Prose
  – 2 part question (in total worth 25 marks)
    • (i) based on Character, Theme or Technique
    • (ii) based on Character, Theme or Technique
  – Time given is 50 minutes to do both questions
Interior of a Dutch House
by Pieter de Hooch
• So what do we see?
• Does this painting have any meaning to you?
• Give 5 general observations about the painting
Basic analysis:

• The painting shows 4 people in a room indoors

• 3 people are enjoying wine (2 men, 1 lady) on the left side of the room at a table

• 1 lady on the right is standing in front of the fireplace
More specific:

- What do you notice about the characters in the painting?
- What about their clothing?
- What about their position in the painting?
- Who are the ones in power?
- How can you tell that?
- What is right in the centre of the floor?
More specific:

- What do you notice about the characters in the painting on the left?
- What about their clothing?
- What are they watching?
More specific:
On the left
• People are dressed in bright expensive clothing
• Enjoying a drink
• The lady is watching her drink
• The gentlemen are watching her
• Who threw the litter?
More specific:

• What do you notice about the character in the painting on the right?

• What about her clothing?

• What is she watching?
More specific:

- She is dressed in dull coloured clothing
- She is looking down on the floor
- She is searching for litter?
- She looks down indicating her inferior status?
More specific:

• Who has the power in this picture?
• Is it the people on the left or the lady on the right?
• How can we support our claim?
More specific:

• If we divide the picture up we can see how the lady (maid/servant?) is excluded

• She is not part of the social gathering. In fact she is completely ignored
Patterns

• How many squares are there in the painting?
  • 3?
  • 6?
  • 100?
Patterns

- Fire place, pictures, paintings, maps, windows, ceiling, floor
Analysis

- What is the point of analysing the patterns and the picture?
When we first started out, the picture looked like this. It was a nice picture but it didn’t have any deeper meaning or significance.
• But as we analysed the picture further, we noticed more and more things.

We looked at:
• the characters (their dressing)
• the power relations
• the nobles and the maid
• the deeper meaning of the painting (it is about how the domestic sphere has set power boundaries between social classes)
• how the patterns and structures of the painting gives more meaning to the painting
• the nobles occupy a bigger space versus the maid (social status and importance)
How do you see the painting now?

How has the meaning and significance of this painting changed?
Unseen Poetry

• How the painting was analysed and how poetry needs to be analysed are exactly the same

• A poem will remain words on a page until you analyse and interpret it and make the poem meaningful.
Is this a poem?

War has bad manners. War eats everything in its path and what it doesn’t eat, it dribbles on.

No form or structure. Just 2 sentences put together.
Is this a poem?

War has bad manners.
War eats everything in its path & what it doesn’t eat it dribbles on.

**Importance of Form, Structure, Language, Words and Diction in a Poem**
The addition of form, capitalised letters, how each word is placed and organised gives more meaning and weight to the poem.
Is this a poem?

War has bad manners.
War eats everything in its path & what
It doesn’t Eat
It Dribbles
On

Form affects content and reading
Not only does form affect the appearance of a poem, it also affects how a poem is read, heard and understood.
Is this a poem?

War has bad manners. War eats everything in its path and what it doesn’t eat, it dribbles on.

**versus**

War has bad manners. War eats everything in its path & what It doesn’t Eat It Dribbles On

How is the reading of the sentence versus the poem different?
War has bad manners
War eats everything
In its path
& what
It doesn’t
Eat
It
Dribbles
On:
What is a poem?

A poem isn’t restricted to just rhymes, forms, structures, themes and ideas or sound devices.

A poem is all these things and none of these things.

It is up to the reader to find meaning in the poem because otherwise it will just remain words on a page.
Poetry Analysis Part 1

• Old House at Ann Siang Hill
  – A specific house, quite aged and stately. Possible historical significance?

• An unusual house this is/ dreams are here before you sleep
  – The house is special and has been occupied for a long time. It is a place that has contained many different hopes and dreams
  – The word sleep conveys a soft serene (peaceful) mood. The soft ‘e’ sound at the end of the line slows down the pace of the line
Poetry Analysis Part 1

• Nothing much will be missed/ eyes not tradition tell you this
  – No one will miss this house. The house is being treated poorly now.
  – Mood changes from peaceful to melancholic
Poetry Analysis Part 2: Techniques

• Whenever you identify a technique, you must explain:
  – Its **FUNCTION** (why it is used) and
    • Eg. Why alliterate a line? Why does the poet use a half rhyme? Why does the poet insert a break in the middle of the poem?
  – Its **EFFECT** this contributes to the reader
    • Eg. The alliteration slows down the reading of the poem. The half rhyme leaves a sense of incompleteness to the poem. The break in the poem signals the change in the poem’s content and meaning.
Effect on the Reader

• 3 main emotions are usually asked when approaching the unseen
  – Sad/Tragic
  – Happy/ Humourous
  – Powerful/ Striking

• Each emotion encompasses a different range of responses and analysis so it is up to you to ensure that you analyse and answer each one carefully.
Important Techniques in Poetry

• **Word Choice**: The young man and I **FACE** each other/ His feet are huge in black sneakers/ laced with white in a complex pattern like a/ set of intentional **SCARS**

  – Why face? What’s the difference between look or see? Less powerful? Face suggests confrontation? Power struggle?

  – Why scars? Decorations or patterns sound frivolous? Cobwebs sounds less violent than scars? Scars suggest conflict and tension?
Important Techniques in Poetry

• **Simile**: I wandered lonely as a cloud
  – Subject ‘I’ compared to a cloud
  – drifts from place to place. Freedom; directionless?

• **Metaphor**: Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day
  – Subject compared to summer
  – Warmth? Life?
Important Techniques in Poetry

• **Hyperbole**: I’ll love you dear, I’ll love you/ Till China and Africa meet,/And the river jumps over the mountain/ And the salmon sing in the street

  – Love is exaggerated to convey poet’s overwhelming feelings and emphasises his enduring love
Important Techniques in Poetry

• **Alliteration**: What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?/ Only the monstrous anger of the guns./Only the stuttering rifles’ rapid rattle
  – Repetition of ‘R’ consonant (rifles’ rapid rattle)
  – Sound quality is fast. Similar to how the rifle is shooting out bullets
  – Contributes to the idea of chaos of war
Important Techniques in Poetry

- **Assonance**: Repetition of vowel sounds. (a, e, i, o, u)
  - On a pr**OU**d r**OU**nd cl**OU**d in wh**I**te h**I**gh n**I**ght (e.e.cummings)

- **Consonance**: Repetition of the same consonant two or three times
  - Rap REJECTS my tape DECK, EJECTS proJECTILE/Whether JEw or GENTILE I rank top perCENTILE
Important Techniques in Poetry

• **PACE**: Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;/ Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see ...
  – Slow prolonged syllables
  – Nostalgic, reflective tone

• **DOMINANCE**: Break, break, break,/ On thy cold, grey stones, O sea!
  – Consecutive stress.
  – Syllables are forceful in tone
Important Techniques in Poetry

• **RHYTHM**: Come live with me and be my love,/ And we will all the pleasures prove/ That hills and valleys, dale and field,/ And all the craggy mountains yield.
  – Regular rhythm
  – Just like the poem’s rhythm which is consistent and constant
  – So too is the persona’s love consistent and constant (this is conveyed by the poem’s rhythm)
Important Techniques in Poetry

• **JUXTAPOSITION**: So stands a snowy dove trooping among crows
  – Snowy: white, the idea of purity
  – Crows: contrast to the black, ugly, crude crowd
  – Example taken from Romeo and Juliet. This is what Romeo says when he sees Juliet for the first time
Poetry Analysis Part 3: Development

• Look out for **CHANGES** in the pattern and flow of the poem.
• Focus on the **BREAKS** in the pattern (that is where a lot of issues about a poem can be uncovered and studied).
• What is the break in the pattern? What can you say about the break? What is the effect of it?
• Analyse this in detail!
Exam Skills

• Remember to focus on the question and ensure your answer is relevant!

• Highlight the **KEYWORD** in the question

• Break-up the keyword into **4-5** points

• Look for evidence to support points. Try to provide at least **2** examples

• For each point, provide **POINT, EVIDENCE, EXPLANATION** and **LINK** to the question keyword

• When discussing techniques, don’t just **IDENTIFY**, state its **PURPOSE**
Poetry Analysis Part 4: Practice analysing the poem

• Now that you’ve learned the various techniques and devices about unseen poetry, it’s time to put it into practice.

• Read the poem *Old House at Ann Siang Hill*

• After reading the poem, look at the questions

• Underline the keyword of the question **UNUSUAL**. Substitute it for other words
  — Eg. Unusual: strange, different, uncommon
Poetry Analysis Part 4:
Practice analysing the poem

• Take 5 minutes to practice analysing the poem on your own
Poetry Analysis Part 4:
Practice analysing the poem

• Refer to the Poem Analysis Word Document
Citations

• The various exercises and sources have been adapted from the following:
  – Suzanne Choo: O’Level Literature Seminar Unseen Poetry 2014
  – Phillip Mcconnell: Master Poetry Class Part 1 2015