

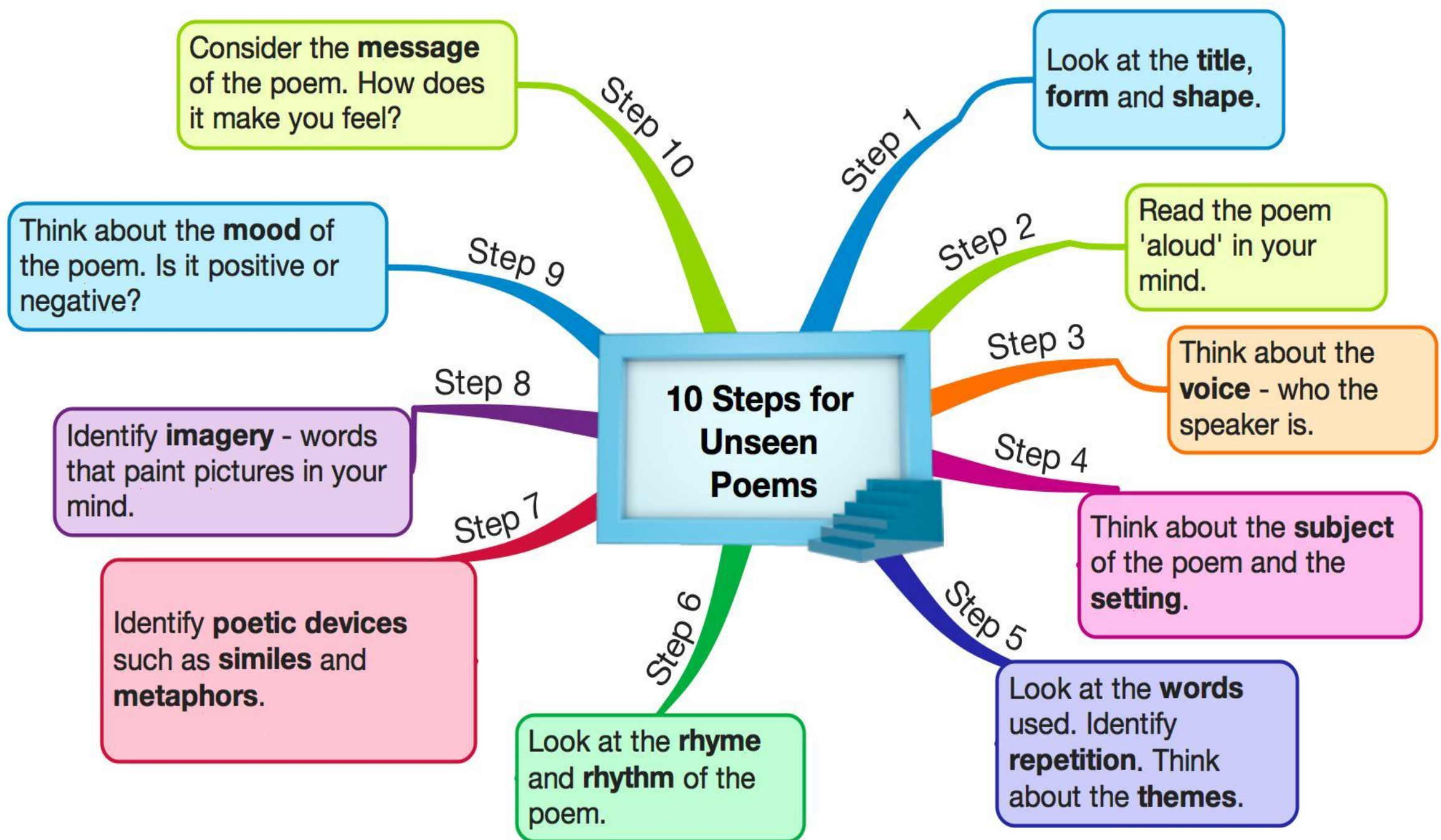
Analysing Unseen Poems



Unseen Poetry

- IEB Examinations: 2 Test Papers
- Paper 1: Comprehension Test, Summary, Seen Poetry, Unseen Poetry, Visual Literacy and Language
- Paper 2: Shakespeare, Novel, Short Stories
- UNSEEN Poetry (Paper 1: Section
- One of the hardest parts of English Literature as the lack of focussed preparation can be daunting





Step 1

- Look at the title and try to predict what the poem is about.
- Look at the form of the poem. How many stanzas are there? How many lines are there in each stanza? Is the poem in a special shape? If so, does the shape mean anything? See the bottom of the page for an example of poem which has a special shape with special meaning.

Step 2

- Read the poem 'aloud' to yourself in your head. Imagine you are reading it out loud (but don't actually do it or you might get into trouble). This is very important because it will help you to notice the **rhythm** and the **rhyme** in the poem.
- DON'T PANIC IF YOU SEE WORDS YOU DON'T KNOW IN UNSEEN POEMS !
- You can usually guess them by looking at the other words.

Step 3

- Think about who the 'speaker' is? Is the poem written through the poet's eyes or is it written in the third person (he/she). These are the **voices** of the poem.

Step 4

- Think about the main **subject** of the poem. You need to think about the **setting** and the **situation**.

Step 5

- Look at the choice of words. Are they negative or positive? Are there any ideas that are repeated? This will help you to identify themes (such as nature).
- Remember not to panic if there are words you don't know.

Step 6

- Look at the rhyme and rhythm of the poem,
- Does the poem **rhyme**? What is the **rhyming pattern**? (e.g. ABAB or ABCB etc)
- Why do you think the poet has chosen this **rhyme** to express his ideas?
- Why do you think the poet has chosen this **rhythm** to express his ideas?
- Do the **sound** and **rhythm** of the lines seem light and bouncy, or do the lines move more slowly with heavy rounded sounds and a slow rhythm?
- Are the **sounds** and **rhythms** different at different places in the poem?

Step 7

- Identify any poetic devices such as **metaphors**, **similes** and **personification**. How do they affect the meaning of the poem? Do they make it stronger?

Step 8

- Look for imagery - descriptive language that 'paints a picture' in the reader's mind.
- What are the main **images** (pictures) the poet uses? Look closely for metaphors, similes and personification
- Which images are particularly striking? Why?
- Are there parts of the poem that ask you to use your senses of **hearing**, **sight**, **smell**, **touch** or **taste**?

Step 9

- Look at the **mood** of the poem.
- What is the **mood** or **tone** of the poem? Does it feel happy, sad, angry, surprised or any other emotions.
- Is the poem trying to teach you something, **persuade** you, **touch** you, **entertain** you or whatever?
- How does the poet feel about the **subject** of the poem?

Step 10

- Lastly, what **message** is the poem giving? Are there any deeper meanings? What can you learn from the poem?
- How is the message conveyed?
- What is your personal response to the poem?
- How did you react to the poem?
- Did it touch you?
- Did it make you think about an issue more deeply, or from a different point of view?
- Do you think the poem is effective? Why?

Exercise 1

INTRODUCTION TO POETRY

by Billy Collins

1 I ask them to take a poem
and hold it up to the
2 light like a colour slide

3 or press an ear against its hive.

4 I say drop a mouse into a poem
and watch him probe his way out,

5 or walk inside the poem's room
and feel the walls for a light switch.

6 I want them to waterski
across the surface of a poem
waving at the author's name on the shore.

7 But all they want to do
is tie the poem to a chair with rope
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose
to find out what it really means.

In this poem, a teacher (the speaker) encourages students to approach their experience of poetry in a certain way.

1. Choose the best approach to poetry as suggested by the speaker. You are only required to write down the question number and the correct letter.

A Approach poetry as a serious study of its varied formal elements.

B Approach poetry as an enjoyable exploration of open possibilities. (1)

2. Quote a single word from stanza 5 to support your answer in 1. (1)

3. Re-read stanza 1. Bearing the poet's central message in mind, what difference would it make if the adjective "colour" were left out of the simile? (2)

4. Stanza 2 consists of a single line: "or press an ear against its hive". (a) What is a poem metaphorically compared to in this line? (1) (b) Write down the missing word to complete the following sentence: This image appeals to our sense of ... (1)

5. What is the effect of the word "But" at the start of stanza 6? (1)

6. If the teacher/speaker wishes for poetry to be an exciting, fun-filled exploration by students, has (he) been successful? Refer closely to the text to support your answer. (3) [10]

It's Over Now By AH Magagula

1 I remember those days when we used to
2 Come to each other with faces full of smiles,
3 With eyes full of joy and loving,
4 Hearts full of longing.
5 But now it's over.
6 I remember those days
7 When we used to talk and never stopped.
8 Mouths full of stammering and murmuring,
9 Not knowing what to say and what to leave out.
10 But don't be sorry for yourself, it's over now.
11 I remember those days
12 When we used to sit under the musharagi tree,
13 With arms around each other's neck,
14 Owning all creatures and nature.
15 Never mind yourself about it now, it's history now.
16 I remember those days
17 When we used to make some earthly promises,
18 Not knowing that one day
19 You will be the tornado that'll wreck my life apart.
20 I may be dreaming but it's over now.
21 We used to see each other everytime
22 Laughter was our breakfast,
23 Smiles our lunch,
24 Joy our supper,
25 And love was our day and night dish.

Read the unseen poem "It's Over Now" before attempting to answer the questions.

1. What does the repeated use of the word "remember" throughout the poem imply about the speaker's feelings? (1)

2. Is line 9, "Not knowing what to say and what to leave out" an accurate description of two people in love? Briefly substantiate your answer. (1)

3. What is the meaning of "it's history now" (line 15)? Write down only the question number and corresponding letter, e.g. 4.3 E.

A Everyone will remember it now.

B The people involved are now famous.

C It is now something in the past.

D The relationship has been going on for a long time. (1)

4. Give an example of one "earthly promise[s]" (line 17) you feel these two lovers would have made. (2)

5. Consider line 19: "You will be the tornado that'll wreck my life apart".

5.1 Identify the figure of speech in this line. (1)

5.2 Give an explanation of what is being compared. (2)

5.3 Is this an effective comparison? Carefully substantiate your answer. (2)

[10]