

GOOSEBERRY SEASON

1. This is a dramatic monologue; what gives the impression that the poem begins mid-conversation? What effect does this have?
2. What happens in the poem? Summarise the story of it and provide evidence.
3. The poem is full of contradictions and often surprising or shocking statements juxtaposed with either innocuous or inconsequential actions or comments. Find examples of some of these and comment on the possible reasons for their inclusion.
4. Why do you think Armitage has chosen to call the poem 'Gooseberry Season'? There is not one right answer; think of as many ideas as you can.
5. What impression do you get of the speaker and the murder victim? What do we learn about each person? What are their similarities and differences?
6. The fourth stanza begins with two rhetorical questions; what do you think the speaker means in posing these questions? Why has Armitage used them at all and why has he placed them here in the poem?
7. What is the tone of the poem? Provide evidence for your ideas.
8. What, if anything, is symbolic about the method of murder and why does Armitage choose for the murderer to drive the body across a border and in his truck, 'without headlights'?
9. What double meaning could there be to the last line of the first stanza, 'we made him a bed'?
10. Is there anything significant or interesting about the structure of the poem? Why, for example, does Armitage have five lines in every stanza?
11. What is the tone of the poem? Do you find it funny; sinister; difficult to identify; or something else?
12. What do you find interesting about the last line of the poem?