

You may have noticed that in the detailed unpicking of the assessment objectives nowhere does it read:

Write about the number of literary or poetic devices used.

This is because the examiner is not interested in technique spotting: it is meaningless to write something like, 'There are three examples of caesura in ...' or 'This poem uses a metaphor' unless you are able to **explain the effect**.

Good Luck!

GCSE English

Understanding the Assessment Objectives

Section A - Poetry from Other
Cultures

The Objectives

AO2

- (i): read, with insight and engagement, making appropriate references to texts and developing and sustaining interpretations of them
- (iv): select material appropriate to purpose, collate material from different sources, and make cross references
- (v): understand and evaluate how writers use linguistic, structural and presentational devices to achieve their effects, and comment on ways language varies and changes

- **Be confident enough to express your own opinions about the effect of the poems**

Again, this isn't an invitation to write:

I thought this poem was rubbish

But rather to give your views about how the writer has expressed themselves.

For example:

In 'Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan' the repetition of the word 'I' (12 times) not only gives me an impression of what an individual and personal experience this was to the speaker but also makes me, as a reader, feel shut out and excluded from the events we hear about, much like the speaker herself feels about Pakistan.

- **Recognise and be able to discuss the language differences in and between the poems and why a poet has chosen them**

Again, you might comment on the use of accent or dialect in a poem or even a different language altogether ('from Search for my Tongue' for example) or it might be the terms of address used. Why, for example, does the speaker in 'Love after Love' refer to 'you' and 'your', 'Not my Business' uses 'they' and 'I' and 'This Room' refers in places to inanimate objects and 'it'?

Section A: Poetry from Other Cultures

Interpreting the Assessment Objectives

AO2(i), remember, is:

read, with insight and engagement, making appropriate references to texts and developing and sustaining interpretations of them

This means you must:

- Know the poems well;
- Provide evidence for what you write;
- Make considered comments about the poems and recognise nuances (or subtleties) in the writing;
- Consider the writer's intention;
- Write fluently about the poems;
- Be able to develop your points through your essay to create a cohesive piece of writing rather than a series of unrelated points.

- **Write about the structure and its effect in detail**

Again, you need to do more than write:

In 'Not my Business' the repetition of the last three lines in the first three stanzas makes the poem flow nicely.

Instead try:

The first three stanzas of 'Not my Business' all have seven lines with the last three lines in each the same. This reflects the complacency of the speaker and his satisfaction with the status quo despite the violence around him.

- **Write about the presentational devices and their effect**

If you write:

In 'from Unrelated Incidents' the lines are really short with no end-stops

you are showing recognition of the device used but not its effect.

Instead, try:

The short lines and lack of end-stops in 'from Unrelated Incidents' mirror the presentation of text on an auto-cue which is used by newsreaders. This adds to the impression that the speaker is mimicking everything about a newsreader's tone; it is the dialect and register that is very different and this becomes increasingly noticeable and insulting as we read the poem.

- **Know the poems well**

You need to be able to write a brief sentence or two to show the examiner that you understand what the poems are about; apart from anything else, you will need to include this information in a brief introduction to your essay. For example, if you write:

'Half-caste' is about a man who is annoyed with people
or

'Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan' is about some new clothes a girl gets sent and doesn't like

Your sentence is vague and does not really summarise the 'layers' in the poem.

Instead, try:

The speaker is angry at the connotations of the phrase 'half-caste' which he shows can be attached to lots of areas of life.

or

'Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan' is about the conflicting feelings a young girl has about her two cultures (Pakistan where she was born and England where she lives) which are expressed through her attitude towards some presents she is sent.

- **Provide evidence for what you write**

There is little point merely writing:

In 'from Search for my Tongue' the poet writes about losing her tongue

as it is not clear to the examiner what you mean, whereas if you write:

The speaker refers metaphorically to the anguish of losing a language by writing about a tongue which will 'rot and die in your mouth / until you had to spit it out'.

Here you are showing the examiner you have proof that your interpretation is right.

AO2(v), remember, is:

understand and evaluate how writers use linguistic, structural and presentational devices to achieve their effects, and comment on ways language varies and changes

This means you must:

- Write about the language and its effect
- Write about the structure and its effect
- Write about the presentational devices and their effect
- Be confident enough to express your own opinions about the effect of the poems
- Recognise and be able to discuss the language differences in and between the poems and why a poet has chosen them

- **Write about the language and its effect in detail**

For example you need to do more than write:

In 'Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan' the poet writes 'Prickly heat had me screaming on the way' to show that the speaker was ill.

Instead try:

'prickly heat' shows how agitated the speaker was by both the literal and metaphorical journey to the new country. The word 'screaming' emphasises the fear and bewilderment the speaker felt.

- **Bring together similar ideas from different poems**

This is all about recognising that although none of the poems are exactly the same some aspects can be connected, using phrases such as, 'In both ...' and 'In ...' and '...' and 'Similarly ...'

For example:

In both 'This Room' and 'from Search for my Tongue' the poets refer to the idea of culture and identity being a living thing which can take root and grow.

- **Show contrasts between different poems**

This is not just about writing:

'Love after Love' is a happy poem but 'from Search for my Tongue' isn't.

The contrasts should be linked to the similarities you've drawn between the poems. For example:

Although 'Love after Love' and 'from Search for my Tongue' are both about the struggle to assimilate two cultures or identities the language of the former: 'smile', 'welcome', 'love' seems much happier and content than the language of the latter which repeats the word 'lost' three times to reflect the sense of bewilderment the speaker feels.

- **Link together your ideas about the various poems you write about**

We've discussed this in the comments above, where you can see that paragraphs and sentences weave the comparisons of the poems together. Remember to use words and phrases such as: 'both', 'similarly', 'firstly', 'however', 'although', 'in comparison' 'in contrast'.

- **Make considered comments about the poems and recognise nuances in the writing**

Rather than writing:

The speaker writes about Akanni being taken away in a jeep and compares it to being eaten

Instead develop the idea and try:

The speaker uses a metaphor of eating to show Akanni being taken away in a jeep. The implied violence contrasts starkly with the self-indulgent image of the speaker who only seems interested in the yam that they don't want taken 'from my savouring mouth'.

- **Consider the author's intention**

Think about the poet's reasons for writing the poem. What are they trying to 'say'? For example, in 'from Unrelated Incidents' is the poet just trying to make us laugh by writing as if reading the news in a Glaswegian dialect or does he want us to think more carefully about our perceptions of people with regional dialects and accents and the way they are often treated by others?

- **Write fluently about the poems**

For example, rather than writing something like:

'Love after Love' is happy. It's as if you're a stranger. The speaker tells his other self to do things. Short sentences sound like commands.

Try:

'Love after Love' has a happy tone despite the commanding nature of some of the speaker's instructions to his other self who seems to be a stranger.

- **Be able to develop your points through your essay to create a cohesive piece of writing rather than a series of unrelated points**

You need to think about this when planning your essay so that one point (and paragraph) connects fluidly to the next.

For example, if one paragraph about the metaphor of the room growing in 'This Room' finishes:

The violence of words such as 'breaking', 'cracking' and 'crash' shows the reader the turmoil the speaker feels through the process of gaining a new culture.

The next could begin:

Similarly in 'from Search for my Tongue' Bhatt uses the metaphor of her tongue literally dying in her mouth and the harsh sounds of words such as 'rot', 'die' and 'spit' show the pent-up anguish the speaker feels.

AO2(iv), remember, is:

select material appropriate to purpose, collate material from different sources, and make cross references

This means you must:

- Connect the points you make with relevant quotations
- Bring together similar ideas from different poems
- Show contrasts between different poems
- Link together your ideas about the various poems you write about

- **Connect the points you make with relevant quotations**

Rather than just repeating or paraphrasing quotations such as:

In 'Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan' the salwar kameez is peacock-blue and orange, 'They sent me a salwar kameez / peacock-blue, / and another / glistening like an orange split open'

Try something like:

'The exceedingly bright colours of the salwar kameez 'peacock-blue' and 'glistening like an orange' show us how dazzling and vibrant the outfit is and how much it contrasts with the drabness of the 'denim and corduroy' which the speaker longs for.