

Compare two of Simon Armitage's poems, in which we both seem to learn a lot about the person discussed, whilst also learning nothing at all. In your answer you should consider:

- Who is being discussed;
- The actions of the person or the items found on them;
- The language Armitage uses to describe the person;
- The presentation of the poem.

**How you might structure your essay: an example**

(Note: the sub-titles are here to guide you, however you should NOT include them in your essay)

**Introduction**

The poems 'Poem' and 'About His Person' – number of similarities – anonymous, apparently dead men. Both appeared to have ordinary lives, nothing special. Layout is similar in that ordinary language is used and some rhyme. Different in that one is a list of how he behaved with family whereas other is a list of things found on him.

**Paragraph 1**

Both men are anonymous by use of the word 'he'. Never learn their names. Title of the poems also suggests lack of information about the men. We learn about things they did and things they had but never explicitly how they felt.

**Paragraph 2**

Language used to describe them is similar. Lots of ordinary, sometimes colloquial language, reflects their ordinariness. Use of objects. However in both poems there are acts of violence in the language, either explicitly (in 'Poem') or implicitly ('About His Person').

**Paragraph 3**

Both poems use rhyme. In 'Poem' the complete rhymes show how his life just rolled on, reflects the monotonous nature of his life. In 'About His Person' the incomplete or near rhymes show how although life might seem to go smoothly, when you look closely it is not all happiness – doesn't fit together completely.

**Paragraph 4**

The way both poems are set out on the page, with the same line length and mostly same stanza length reveals again how ordinary the lives of the men seem to be, they're nothing special in the way that nothing stands out or jumps off the page at you.

**Paragraph 5**

One is a list of how he interacts with his family and the other is a list of things found on him. In 'About His Person' it is the item that is missing that tells us most about the man. It is probably a wedding ring. Does this mean he has committed suicide? This poem leaves us with question marks whereas 'Poem' shows you at the end what people think of him. They don't question his behaviour, he is not extraordinary and therefore the last two lines are statements, not questions. Nobody cares.

**Conclusion**

Both poems make us think we can draw conclusions about the men but then we realise we can't, we don't know anything about the men. We perhaps even know less about them at the end of the poems because we realise we can't say anything about them at all.