

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.
- 

The **first** thing you need to do when faced with a question like this is to read the question through at least three times to make sure you understand it and underline the key words to ensure you are focusing on the essential parts of the question.

The **second** thing you need to do is decide which poems best suit the question.

The **third** thing you need to do is to draw yourself a plan. This will not only help you structure your answer but, if you don't have time to finish, the examiner will know what you were intending to write and can see that you had further points to develop.

There are various ways of doing a plan. You might like to draw a spider diagram or you might prefer to write a list of bullet points. Either way, get the plan down on paper quickly and once you've noted the ideas down number them in order of importance, or relevance, to the question.

You always make yourself look cleverer if you can use objective language that suggests you are considering the poem as a student who is interested in how poetry works; a personal response is still required but thinking carefully about how you phrase your answer will make you seem a more sophisticated reader. Do the task on the next page to practice your essay writing style.

Have a go at altering the following sentences so they sound more objective and academic. You can change them completely or just change a few words:

1. I'm going to write about 'Poem' and 'About His Person' in here.
2. I think 'Poem' is about a man who's horrible in some ways and nice in some ways.
3. These poems are similar and yet different.
4. He isn't very nice because it says he 'Always tucked her up at night and slipped her the one time that she lied.'
5. The title of 'About His Person' obviously has two meanings.
6. In the poem there's a list of things the man owned and these are ordinary and boring and then they're not.

Share your ideas with a partner and discuss why you changed particular words.

#### **LIST OF USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES**

The poet                      this suggests that                      might think the tone

As readers we question                      it is probable that                      perhaps Armitage meant

It is implied                      although the poet never says there is an underlying feeling that

We may wonder                      the stanzas                      the line length

the long vowel sounds                      in comparison                      in contrast

it is ironic that                      however                      alternatively                      despite this

it is doubtful                      there is doubt that                      the ending is inconclusive

we are left wondering                      the double meanings suggest

the poet only alludes to                      we can infer                      it is effective because

the kindness is juxtaposed with acts of violence                      the monotony

the loneliness                      the emptiness