

# A Level English Literature



## EXEMPLAR RESPONSES

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A level paper 3 (Poetry) Section B – poetry movement or poet

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## About this exemplar pack

This pack has been produced to support English Literature teachers delivering the new GCE English Literature specification (first assessment summer 2017).

The pack contains exemplar student responses to GCE A level English Literature paper 3 (Section B – Poetry movement/poet). For schools delivering a co-taught AS and A level course, the poetry movement/poet will be covered in the second year, as it is assessed at A level only. For schools teaching a linear 2 year A level only, the course content can be taught in any order. Please see the example [course planners](#) for more support on delivering the course content.

The AS and A level questions address 3 Assessment Objects: AO1, AO2, AO3.

<b>Students must:</b>	
<b>AO1</b>	Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression
<b>AO2</b>	Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts
<b>AO3</b>	Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received
<b>AO4</b>	Explore connections across literary texts
<b>AO5</b>	Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations
<b>Total</b>	

Following each question you will find the mark scheme for the band that the student has achieved, with accompanying examiner comments on how the marks have been awarded, and any ways in which the response might have been improved.

Please refer to the specific marking guidance on page 2 when applying this marking grid.

		A01 = bullet point 1	A02 = bullet point 2	A03 = bullet point 3
Level	Mark	Descriptor (A01, A02, A03)		
	0	No rewardable material.		
<b>Level 1</b>	1–6	<b>Descriptive</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes little reference to texts with limited organisation of ideas. Limited use of appropriate concepts and terminology with frequent errors and lapses of expression.</li> <li>• Uses a narrative or descriptive approach that shows limited knowledge of texts and how meanings are shaped in texts. Shows a lack of understanding of the writer’s craft.</li> <li>• Shows limited awareness of contextual factors.</li> </ul>		
<b>Level 2</b>	7–12	<b>General understanding/exploration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes general points, identifying some literary techniques with general explanation of effects. Aware of some appropriate concepts and terminology. Organises and expresses ideas with clarity, although still has errors and lapses.</li> <li>• Gives surface readings of texts relating to how meanings are shaped in texts. Shows general understanding by commenting on straightforward elements of the writer’s craft.</li> <li>• Has general awareness of the significance and influence of contextual factors. Makes general links between texts and contexts.</li> </ul>		
<b>Level 3</b>	13–18	<b>Clear relevant application/exploration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers a clear response using relevant textual examples. Relevant use of terminology and concepts. Creates a logical, clear structure with few errors and lapses in expression.</li> <li>• Demonstrates knowledge of how meanings are shaped in texts with consistent analysis. Shows clear understanding of the writer’s craft.</li> <li>• Demonstrates a clear exploration of the significance and influence of contextual factors. Develops relevant links between texts and contexts.</li> </ul>		
<b>Level 4</b>	19–24	<b>Discriminating controlled application/exploration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constructs a controlled argument with fluently embedded examples. Discriminating use of concepts and terminology. Controls structures with precise cohesive transitions and carefully chosen language.</li> <li>• Demonstrates discriminating understanding of how meanings are shaped in texts. Analyses, in a controlled way, the nuances and subtleties of the writer’s craft.</li> <li>• Provides a discriminating analysis of the significance and influence of contextual factors. Makes detailed links between texts and contexts.</li> </ul>		
<b>Level 5</b>	25–30	<b>Critical and evaluative</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presents a critical evaluative argument with sustained textual examples. Evaluates the effects of literary features with sophisticated use of concepts and terminology. Uses sophisticated structure and expression.</li> <li>• Exhibits a critical evaluation of the ways meanings are shaped in texts. Displays a sophisticated understanding of the writer’s craft.</li> <li>• Presents a sophisticated evaluation and appreciation of the significance and influence of contextual factors. Makes sophisticated links between texts and contexts.</li> </ul>		

## EXEMPLAR RESPONSE A

### Poet – Keats

Explore Keats' treatment of nature in *To Autumn* and one other poem. You must discuss relevant contextual factors.

Any number of Keats' poems might be considered in an exploration of his treatment of nature. Along with *To Autumn*, Keats' displayed his interest in the natural world across a range of his poetry, particularly his odes, including *Ode on Melancholy*, *Ode to Psyche* and *Ode to a Nightingale*. As a poet writing within the Romantic movement, Keats' detailed and vivid descriptions of nature are symbolic of his exploration of the human condition and the inevitability of change and ultimately death.

In his ode, *To Autumn*, written in 1819 Keats focuses on an appeal to the senses. The first stanza of the three contains dense lines, packed with descriptive words that make the reader or listener work hard due to the repeated round vowel sounds "mellow" "load" "round" "flowers" and the use of sibilance "mists" "close blossom" "bless" "moss'd cottage-trees." The effort required to work through the thick sounds and the full lines of the first stanza might be representative of the efforts that nature has gone through in producing the full fruits which Keats is describing "to swell the gourds and plump the hazel shells." Nature, in *To Autumn*, is hardworking and cyclical. Autumn is positioned between summer "for summer has o'er brimmed their clammy cells" and spring "where are the songs of spring?" and so is inevitably leading to an ending, or death, although this is only gently alluded to in *To Autumn*.

In *Ode to a Nightingale* the reality of death is something to try and escape from, by being transported into a mythical natural world by the Nightingale's song. The power of nature to transport you from the real world to a vivid mythological world is presented as being similar to the effects of drinking alcohol, or being poisoned "a drowsy numbness pains my sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk." Over the 8 stanzas of this Ode, Keats' creates an escape to nature which is here presented as being immune from worries about death or decay "forget what thou among the leaves hast never known, The weariness, the fever, and the fret." As with *To Autumn*, the vivid descriptions stimulate the senses, with sensations within the "forest dim." For example, the variety of temperatures "cool'd" "sunburnt" "warm" as well as the smells and tastes of nature, such as "tasting of flora and the country green" and "soft incense". Alliteration works to create the sensation of the sounds and feelings being described, for example "beaded bubbles winking at the brim" suggests the sensation of bubble popping in the mouth. As with *To Autumn*, Keats use of language stimulates the senses in the same ways as they would be stimulated by nature.

Keats' descriptions of nature are typical of the concerns of the Romantic poets who focused on the natural world and its spiritual or mystical qualities in response to the increasing urbanisation and rationality of the 1800s. The increasingly scientific approach to nature of the enlightenment is counteracted with the more sensory and aesthetic focus of Romantic poetry which can be seen in both of these examples of Keats' work. As is also a theme of Romantic poetry, *Ode to a Nightingale* makes allusions to mythology "Lethé" "Bacchus" "Queen Moon" which highlight the difference between the depressing physical world and the

mythical spiritual world of the nightingale's song. In the real world "youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies." However poetry can transport the listener beyond reality into the sensory world of nature with "the viewless wing of Poesy", just like the song of the nightingale. The reference to mythology represents the endless continuation of the nightingale's song, which has continued through the ages "in ancient days" and is contrasted with the mortality of human life.

In both poems, Keats' presents nature as both beautiful and sensual but also sometimes overpowering and unnerving. This is more explicit in *Ode to a Nightingale*, for example in the 5<sup>th</sup> stanza with the dense quantity of the description, and the lack of sight, creating a sense of being surrounded by heavy smells and sounds in the "embalmed darkness." In keeping with a characteristic of romantic poetry, the speaker is presented as individually suffering and troubled but using imagination and art "Poesy" as a means to escape. In *Ode to Autumn*, the imagery is less visceral, but the Keats' consideration of harvesting in the second stanza shows glimpses of danger "half reaped furrows" "twinning flowers" "oozing." Nature can either be something which transports you from the reality of endings and death, as with the Nightingale's song "thou wast not born for death immortal bird" or something in which endings are inevitable, but as part of the cycle of life and death.

The structure of both poems contributes to the sensual way in which nature is presented by Keats. The 10 lines stanzas of *Ode to a Nightingale* follow a repeated rhyme scheme through that length of the poem. This is more simple and repetitive than the rhyme scheme of *To Autumn*, which repeats an ABAB structure for the opening 4 lines of each stanza but varies this in the following 7 lines. The rhythmic repetition in *Ode to a Nightingale* (ABABCDECDE) enhances the dreamlike quality of the poem, and its allusions to drunkenness or hallucination are emphasised by the trance-like effect of repeating the rhyming pattern over all 8 stanzas. The effect of the rhyming structure of *To Autumn* is to create a distinction between the opening of the stanza and the following lines, which build upon and develop the subject of each stanza. This is further emphasised by the use of a semicolon at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> line in all three stanzas.

Although Keats is transported by the song of the nightingale, this is only temporary, as he is brought crashing back to reality with the intrusion of the word 'forlorn' into his thoughts. "Forlorn" ends the penultimate stanza and starts the final word, emphasizing the impact of the word "like a bell" and its effect of ending the dreamlike state which has been created by the evocative natural imagery and rhyme. Unlike the song of the nightingale, we cannot escape death "cannot cheat so well" although the influence of the power of nature is so strong that it can distort the senses "do I wake or sleep?" Written before *To Autumn*, *Ode to a Nightingale* seeks to transcend death, through appeals to the timelessness of nature and allusions to mythology. The later poem remains grounded in the reality of nature as growth, life and then death. Although there is some suggestions of sadness "in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn" the tone is more of inevitability as nature continues as if it is unconcerned with what is to come. Written in the present simple tense, which suggests a regular or recurring activity, the animals "bleat" "whistle" and "twitter" like they will have done all through the year.

In conclusion, Keats' treatment of nature reflects his concerns as a poet within the romantic movement but also show his own development from trying to escape death through imagination and retreating to the natural world to seeing the natural world as being cyclical, and although death is inevitable, so is the return of life in spring.

**Marker's comments**

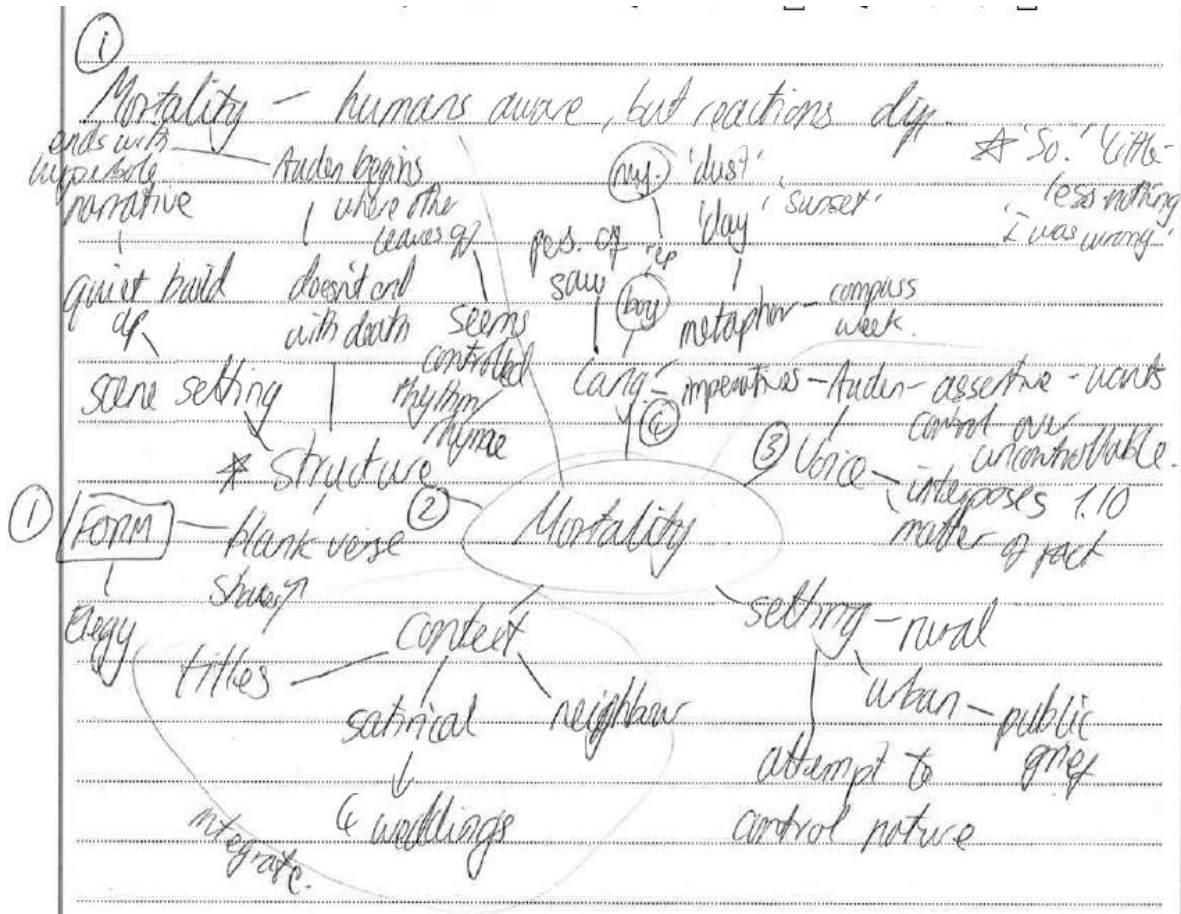
This is a Level 4 response which shows discriminating understanding and analysis and controlled argument. The essay displays a clear sense of what the Romantic Movement is doing and establishes the mood and tone of both poems. It might have developed more points about the mood changes in "To Autumn", but the conclusions about escape, death and the cyclical nature of the natural world are well observed.

**Level 4 – 24 marks**

## EXEMPLAR RESPONSE B

### Poetry movement – Modernism

Explore the ways in which mortality is dealt with in Out Out by Robert Frost and one other poem.





Awareness of our mortality does not mean that we find it any easier to deal with death when it arrives in our families and loved ones or to accept the finality of what has happened.

'Out, out' and 'Funeral Blues' by W.H. Auden both explore our responses to mortality, but whereas 'Out, Out' presents the build up and moment of death, with only a brief, ~~cursor~~ cursory consideration of the aftermath, 'Funeral Blues' focuses fully on the intense violent grieving following a death.

The poets' choices for the form and structure of their poems help to develop the different tones of voice in the poems, providing different perspectives on mortality. 'Out, Out' uses the blank verse that Shakespeare himself used in Macbeth's speech following Lady Macbeth's ~~old~~ death, placing this rural death of a country boy on the same standing as the death of royalty. (\*from which the title is derived.) This highlights that every death is significant or perhaps, conversely, that our time living 'signifies nothing' as death comes to all. 'Funeral Blues' uses the form of an elegy, although Auden's manipulation of the rhyme scheme to an AABB structure creates a much more insistent and

dramatic tone, than if he had used the more pleasant ~~at~~ ABAB Structure. It is as if the Speaker is demanding for everyone at the 'funeral' where this 'elegy' is read to listen and show their grief. Also, the controlled rhythm of an elegy isn't sustained through the poem, with frequent additions to the normal iambic pentameter, ~~in~~ <sup>the</sup> lines ending with 'juicy bone', 'public doves', 'I was wrong'. The voice is able to control their grief in this restrained form with their extreme emotion spilling out of the form. In contrast, 'Out, Out' appears to be very controlled with the voice generally taking a much more distant, descriptive perspective of the events happening to others. ~~The~~ Frost begins by setting the scene in Vermont of a ~~to~~ word being chopped, with the incident happening mid-way and the death only coming at the very end of the poem. This narrative structure serves to highlight that the day was normal 'nothing happened' and that death can appear in lives very suddenly. Perhaps Frost took this approach out of respect for the family of his neighbour to whom this event actually happened - he reports the event in this poem, but leaves the reader to provide the outpouring of emotion. The voice

only interposes once with 'Call it a day, I wish they might have said/ to please the boy'. The sudden change to this first person draws attention to the hindsight which affords this view and the idea that perhaps the boy's death could have ~~been~~ been prevented; ~~the~~ however, this only serves to highlight more starkly that we have no control over these events - our mortality.

Frost also uses the ~~an~~ crafting of sentence structures to express the emotions of the narrative reactions to the event. For example, 'But the hand!' is an incomplete sentence ~~and~~ expressing the shock of the boy, sister and reader at the event. Frost also uses the sentence structures at the moment of the death to suggest the diminishing heart beat and the by using short simple sentences and then the dashes presenting the increasing pauses between the final beats in 'Little-less-nothing!'. The matter of fact tone of 'and that ended it. No more to build on there' presents quite an anti-climax to a human's loss of life, preparing the reader for the final lines of the poem where the rest of the community ~~continue~~ <sup>\* turned to their affairs</sup> with their lives and the boy's death is dismissed; the enjambement of these

final two lines emphasises that life continues in the same place as death.

The concept that life will continue is exactly what the voice in Auden's poem is trying to prevent, cannot accept and demands that no one else allows it to happen either. The first two stanzas are replete with imperatives as the voice demands just that that 'silence reigns' and then that with 'clocks', 'telephone' and 'dogs' all are all silenced and then that the public world all take part in the mourning as it is announced in the 'sky', and 'doves' and 'tragic policemen' visually. However, the third stanza suggests an exhaustion at this attempt to control all, with the voice admitting that they ~~to~~ have lost their life through the death of this loved one. The final line of this stanza is an admission of and acceptance of mortality with the caesura placing focus on the final words 'I was wrong'. Despite this moment of acceptance, the final stanza returns to the idea of control, but now the complete despair is expressed through the extreme hyperbole of dismantling the whole universe of 'stars', 'moon', 'sun' and 'ocean'. The reader is left in a black hole 'For nothing

'now can ever come to any good.' This distinct final sentence presents an extreme pessimism, which is missing from Frost's poem. The emotion is so extreme throughout the poem that without modern readers using the familiar lens of 'Four Weddings and a Funeral's' rendition of this poem, it might be considered far too exaggerated. It's interesting to note that this poem was first written to be included in a play satirising the reaction to the death of a politician. This context would have had an audience roaring with laughter rather than sobbing.

~~Frost~~ In contrast, the first impression that 'Out, out' is presenting a detached view of mortality can be questioned with the context of it being written during World War I, when the public were being faced with such atrocious loss of young lives (as Frost had been living in England at the outbreak). ~~So~~ Although this poem on one level appears to be ~~as~~ a simple narrative about a boy who dies after his hand is chopped off, the sadder aside where the narrator wishes the boy had been given an extra 'half hour' which he would 'that a boy counts so much' draws attention to the fact he

is a youth doing men's work. The word 'boy' is repeated until the line 'big boy / Doing a man's work, though a child at heart'. The repeated focus on his young age, sandwiched around 'man's work' suggests a disgust at this event and that this situation shouldn't have been allowed. Taking this viewpoint, the ending of the poem then takes a deeper meaning that the public or the adults in charge - the government, turn their backs on the destruction of young men whilst they work at the machines of war.

\* The repetition of the pronoun 'my' with the powerful metaphors of place, through the compass, and time, through the references to 'week', 'Sunday', 'noon', 'midnight', presents an exhausting list to try to encompass the idea that the man who died was 'everything' to the speaker.

The range of emotions expressed in the two poems from ~~at~~ detached acceptance to raging grief serve to emphasise that mortality is not something we deal with, but we are forever trying to come to terms with its existence.

### Marker's comments

This response demonstrates all the qualities looked for at Level 5. The answer constantly seeks out considerations of mortality in both poems – beginning with the “aftermath” of a death and how they treat this differently, then examining the handling of “the concept that life will continue”. The answer is very strong on looking at structure, leading to a sophisticated appreciation of tone: for example it can see through the apparent “detached view of mortality” in the Frost poem and makes an interesting observation on this as a political poem. The answer goes slightly awry when looking at *The Ascent of F6* background to the Auden poem but nevertheless makes interesting observations on hyperbole.

### Level 5 – 30 marks

## EXEMPLAR RESPONSE C

### Poetry movement – The Movement

Unhappy relationships are presented in both *One Flesh*, by Elizabeth Jennings and *Metamorphosis* by Peter Porter. Both of these poems consider the ways in which relationships can turn from their early days “a former passion” and their later days, or even their endings.

Although the relationship in *One Flesh* is not over, the ways in which the poet describes the elderly couple gives the impression that the things which made the relationship happy, are basically over: they rarely touch and have separate beds and little in common to talk about. The relationship in *Metamorphosis* is over, but the emotional connection is still strong between the poetic voice and the woman in the poem, for example “we talk of how we miss each other”. The sense of regret and anger is stronger in this poem, as it is presented from the point of view of one of the people within the relationship, whereas *One Flesh* is presented as the point of view of the couple’s child, who might be taking a more depressing view of her parent’s relationship as she is younger and might be unsatisfied by ‘chastity’ and ‘silence’.

Both poems are focused on the normal relationships and objects of everyday life. They are presented simply and realistically with colloquial language which is relatable to the audience. These are some of the features of poetry which was part of The Movement, and these two poets, along with others like Philip Larkin were concerned with giving a particularly English voice to poetry, moving away from the more elitist poetry and mystical or symbolic imagery which followed the second world war. This is ironic, as Peter Porter was actually Australian, but his subject within *Metamorphosis* makes reference to everyday features of English life and objects of the time, for example “new Daks suit” and “in the pub with my Worthington.”

Although both poems present everyday ideas, like the ending of relationships in quite a simple and straightforward way, there are elements which create an uneasy sense, so that although this is normal life, all might not be exactly what it seems. For example, the first two stanzas of *One Flesh* follow a rhyme scheme ababaa, although the rhyme between “childhood” and the other lines “bed” “unread” and “overhead” is only a half rhyme, which slightly disrupts the flow of the first stanza and interrupts the rhythm and the expectation of the reader or listener. This might be foreshadowing the awkwardness in how the poet sees the relationship between the older people, and how this relationship is no longer perfectly in time. This can also be seen in the third stanza “feather” and “mother” which are the half rhymes which surround the revelation about the identity of the poetic voice and so could be seen to be creating the unsettling reaction to this revelation.



Although poems within the Movement might be characterised as having quite simple metre and rhyming schemes, *Metamorphosis* also makes use of the disrupting impact of half rhymes and also eye rhymes, which appear to rhyme but don't. For example in the first stanza he uses "greeny-brown", "own" and "show" which give the impression that they are going to rhyme, but actually don't. This creates a unnerving contrast with the tone of the first stanza, which is presented as positive and optimistic "the first stage in the change" and suggests that perhaps everything is not as bright as the poetic voice is suggesting and that things may not always be as they might appear to be at first sight. The use of enjambment in this opening stanza also gives a sense of too much enthusiasm, as though he is trying to convince himself with his rushed thoughts and very detailed description of his new suit, for example "Oyster-coloured buttons, single vent, tapered/Trousers, no waistcoat, hairy tweed"

The couple in *One Flesh* are presented as opposites. For example, the man "keeping the light on" and the woman "fixed on the shadows" as they sit in their separate beds. Jennings' representation of the couple is mournful, as though they have lost something fundamental. The use of the simile "tossed up like flotsam" compares their relationship to what is left floating on the sea after a storm whereas their previous life, which resulted in her being born is described by the metaphor "fire from which I came." Jennings uses imagery minimally, as is common in poets writing within the Movement, so these few examples may have been selected especially for their impact in contrasting the heat of their former passions and the cold and broken material which is left.

The penultimate line of the third and final stanza reveals that the poetic voice of is the child of the couple, which could be considered to put a different slant on the preceding descriptions. Although they are not consumed by their former passion, they are "strangely apart, yet strangely close together" and there is still "a thread to hold". The revelation of the final stanza could be seen as shifting the subject of the poem from the actuality of the couple's relationship to the way in which this is perceived by their child, and therefore could be seen to reflect her own feelings about what makes a good relationship rather than the feelings of the couple themselves, who might, actually, be content with the ways in which they are still "strangely close". The example of caesura in the 4<sup>th</sup> line of the final stanza emphasises the shift which occurs at this point between the objective review of the couple's situation and the biased view of their child.

Porter's poem is presented as the viewpoint of one of the people within the couple but interestingly the poetic voice is shown to be best at perceiving himself when he sees himself as a reflection, which might be similar to the way that the couple in *One Flesh* are reflected through the point of view of their daughter. In *Metamorphosis*, the poetic voice sees himself in reflection in stanza two, for example "A thin reflection in the windows" and also in stanza four "I look at the wild mirror at the bar." In the first example, the reflection appears to satisfy him "I am myself at last", but in the presence of his former love it

appears that his attempts to present himself as getting over her “return to life” are shown to be a façade, for example “As in a werewolf film I’m horrible”. The suit which was previously presented as a source of pride is now like a form of punishment, for example “my tyrant suit/Chokes me as it hugs me in its fire.”

In both poems, it seems that the poets are unclear as to what makes a happy relationship. The poetic voice in Jennings poem regrets the loss of passion and physical affection in her parents’ marriage and the poetic voice in Porter’s poem regrets that his relationship has ended, but focuses on possessions, for example his “new Daks suit” and wishes “If only I had a car.” In both cases unhappy relationships are presented as perceptions from the outside whilst the people inside the couple are either unable to be happy, or are maybe not actually unhappy after all.

### Marker’s comments

This fluent and confident answer makes excellent use of point of view, and is aware of how it is different in the two poems discussed as well as how it shifts within the poems themselves. The shift in *One Flesh* from “the actuality of the couple’s relationship to the way in which this is perceived by the child” is sharply observed and nicely linked to the poetic voice in *Metamorphosis* “perceiving himself as a reflection.” The change in that poem from seeing a suit as a source of pride to a form of punishment is also noted. There is an appropriate use of contextual awareness with reference to the Movement poets and close analysis of form and structure, placing this answer at the top of Level 5.

### Level 5 – 30 marks

