



## Meaning

AO1

- **what is the poem about?**
- **who is the speaker?** - are they dramatized (a character)
- **who is being spoken to or addressed?**
- **what is being spoken about?**
- **Theme(s)** of the poem - what is it really about?
- **Setting/culture** - where's the poem set? Culture it is from/about?
- **where does the poem "get to" from start to end?**

## Structure

- **Rhyme** - is there a rhyme scheme? Couplets? Internal rhyme?
- **Rhythm** - how many syllables per line? Is it regular or free verse? Why are some different lengths?
- **Stanzas** - How many? How do they change? Is there a narrative?
- **Lines** - how many are there in each verse? Do some stand out?
- **Enjambment** - do the lines "run on" to the next line or stanza?
- **End stopping** - does each line finish at the end of a sentence?
- **Form** - does the poem have a shape to it?

AO2

## Imagery

- **Alliteration** - the repeating of initial sounds.
- **Assonance** - is the term used for the repetition of vowel sounds within consecutive words as in, 'rags of green weed hung down...'
- **Metaphor** - comparing two things by saying one is the other.
- **Simile** - comparing two things saying one is like or as the other.
- **Personification** - giving something non-human human qualities.
- **Onomatopoeia** - words that sound like the thing they describe.
- **Repetition** - does the poet repeat words or phrases?

AO2

# MITSL

Meaning, Imagery, Tone, Structure, Language (My Itchy Toes Smell Loads)

Always link everything to meaning. Ask yourself how does this contribute to the meaning? Why has the poet used this technique?

AO1

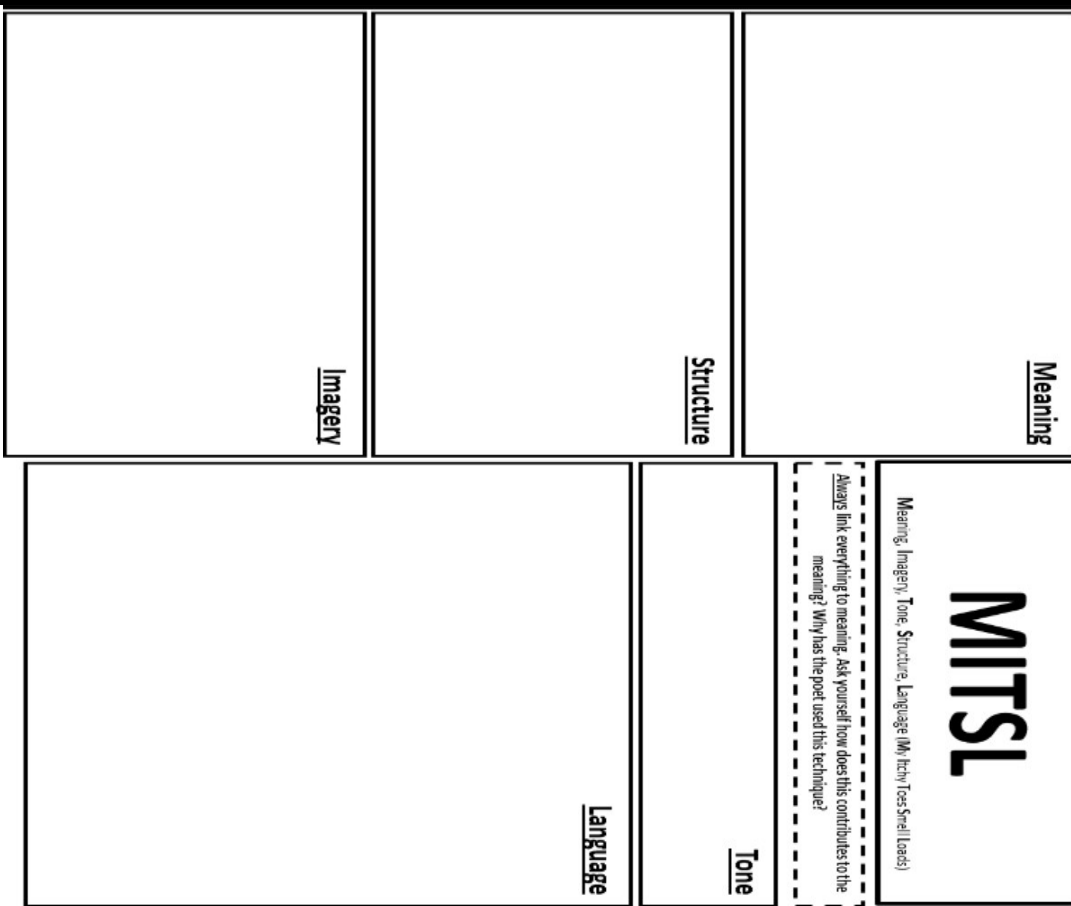
Tone

- How would the poem be spoken? (angry, sad, nostalgic, bitter, humorous etc)

## Language

- **What kinds of words are used?**
- **Puns** - a pun is a play on words - "Shear Class!" if Shearer scores.
- **Connotation** - associations that words have (as "stallion" connotes a certain kind of horse with certain sorts of uses)?
- **Double meanings** - "butts in" - putting bottoms in or interrupting.
- **Ambiguity** - is the word or phrase deliberately unclear? Could it mean opposite things or many different things?.
- **Word order** - are the words in an unusual order - why?
- **Adjectives** - what are the key describing words?
- **Key words and phrases** - do any of the words or phrases stand out? Do they shock? Are the words "violent" or "sad" etc?
- **Slang or unusual words and misspellings** - Does the poet use slang or informal language? Are American words used?
- **Intertextuality** - does the poem reference another text?
- **Style** - does the poet copy another style? (Newspaper, play etc)
- **Characters** - if there are characters how do they speak?

AO2



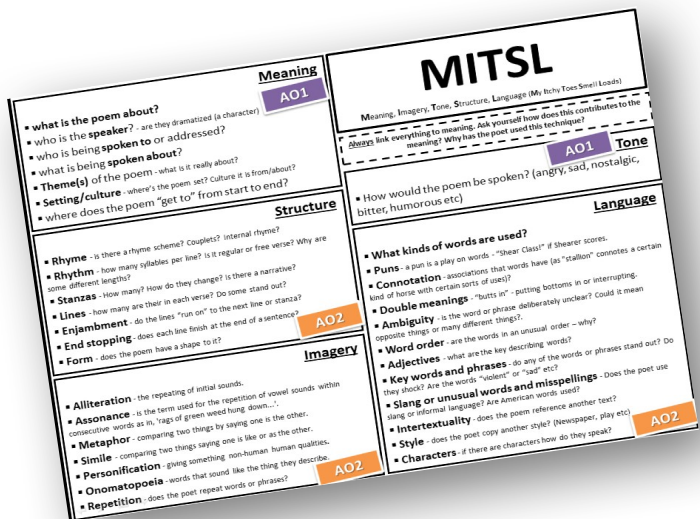
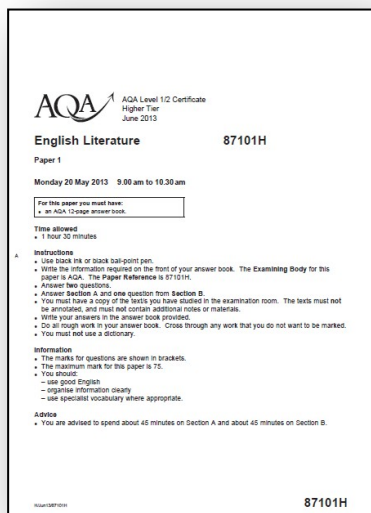
poem – this  
 ll as answering

nd his job as a  
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 ig and tone of the  
 e.g. nostalgic,  
 nd use evidence

2. The second part of the question will ask you to think about the **methods** used e.g. **LANGUAGE, STRUCTRE, IMAGERY. AO2.**

**Methods – AO2**

- Don't worry too much if you cannot remember the name for a method/technique – if you think the quotation is interesting and powerful use it anyway and talk about the effect of the words. Refer to it as 'emotive language'.
- **Methods:** remember to write about **STRUCTURE** as well as **LANGUAGE** and **IMAGERY.**
- Remember **MITSL – Meaning/Imagery/Tone/Structure/Language = My Itchy Toes Smell Loads.**



## What to Do in the Exam

**Read the question** before you read the poem – it will give you a clue for what to look for.



**Read the poem** through once and highlight words and phrases that stand out and that you think are interesting.



**Read the poem** through a second time and this time LABEL techniques and features.



**Read the poem** through a third time looking for more techniques and annotate the effect of the techniques around the poem.



**Answer** the question carefully aiming to write at least two sides of detailed analysis.



**Proofread** your answer carefully – make sure you have used a wide range of quotations.

## What to Do if You Get Really Stuck...



- ✓ Count the number of lines in each verse. Does the number of lines in each verse change? Think of a reason for this.
- ✓ Look at the punctuation !?... Think of a reason for why the punctuation has been used.
- ✓ Look for a semantic field – what mood/feeling does it create?
- ✓ Focus on individual words. Which words really stand out – what might be the effect?

### Introduction:

Summarise what is happening in them poem.

Identify the tone of the poem.

Explain what the poet's message is.

Remember to write **a lot** about a little.

**Remember: Meaning  
Tone Imagery Structure  
Language**

### Useful Phrases:

- This suggests..
- This may make the reader feel...
- The poet conveys a sense of...
- The word which is particularly effective is...
- Perhaps the author has used this phrase to ....
- The use of this adjective/verb/imperative suggests....
- Language is very significant here because....

**A\* students develop multiple interpretations – that is they give more than one possible meaning or effect. Use the word PERHAPS**

e.g. ***perhaps the writer is trying to suggest that ....***

***Alternatively we could see this as... Another interpretation of this could be....***

### Comparing

Equally

Likewise

In the same way

As with

Similarly

### Contrasting / Qualifying

Although

However

Whereas

On the other hand

Alternatively

### Illustrating

For example

In the case of

As revealed by

For instance

Such as

## Nettles

My son aged three fell in the nettle bed.  
'Bed' seemed a curious name for those green spears,  
That regiment of spite behind the shed:  
It was no place for rest. With sobs and tears  
The boy came seeking comfort and I saw  
White blisters beaded on his tender skin.  
We soothed him till his pain was not so raw.  
At last he offered us a watery grin,  
And then I took my billhook, honed the blade  
And went outside and slashed in fury with it  
Till not a nettle in that fierce parade  
Stood upright any more. And then I lit  
A funeral pyre to burn the fallen dead,  
But in two weeks the busy sun and rain  
Had called up tall recruits behind the shed:  
My son would often feel sharp wounds again.

**Vernon Scannell**

Meaning

# MITSL: Nettles

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Always link everything to meaning. Ask yourself how does this contribute to the meaning? Why has the poet used this technique?

Structure

Tone

Language

Imagery

## Welltread

Welltread was the Head and the Head's face was a fist. Yes,  
I've got him. Spelling and Punishment. A big brass bell  
dumb on his desk till only he shook it, and children  
ran shrieking in the locked yard. Mr Welltread, Sir

He meant well. They all did then. The loud, inarticulate dads  
the mothers who spat on hankies and rubbed you away.  
but Welltread looked like a gangster. Welltread stalked  
the forms, collecting thrupenny bits in a soft black hat.

We prayed for Aberfan, vaguely reprieved. My socks dissolved,  
two grey pools at my ankles, at the shock of my name  
called out. The memory brings me to my feet  
as a foul would. The wrong child for a trite crime.

And all I could say was *No*. Welltread straightened my hand  
as though he could read the future there, then hurt himself  
more than he hurt me. There was no cause for complaint.  
There was the burn of a cane in my palm, still smouldering.

**Carol Ann Duffy**



Meaning

# MITSL: Welltread

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# Hard Frost

Frost called to water 'Halt!'  
And crushed the most snow with sparkling salt;  
Brooks, their own bridges, stop,  
And icicles in long stalactites drop,  
And tench in water-holes  
Lurk under gluey glass like fish in bowls.

In the hard-rutted lane  
At every footstep breaks a brittle pane,  
And twinkling trees ice-bound  
Changed into weeping willows, sweep the ground;  
Dead boughs take root in ponds  
And ferns on windows shoot their ghostly fronds.

But vainly the fierce frost  
Interns poor fish, ranks trees in harmed host,  
Hangs daggers from house-eaves  
And on the windows ferny ambush weaves;  
In the long war grown warmer  
The sun will strike him dead and strip his armour.

## Glossary:

- **Brooks – streams**
- **Stalactites – rocks hanging from cave ceiling**
- **Tench – fish**
- **Boughs – branches**
- **Fronds – leaves**
- **Interns - keeps**

Meaning

# MITSL: Hard Frost

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Imagery

## Hour

Love's time's beggar, but even a single hour,  
bright as a dropped coin, makes love rich.

We find an hour together, spend it not on flowers  
or wine, but the whole of the summer sky and a grass ditch.

For thousands of seconds we kiss; your hair  
like treasure on the ground; the Midas light  
turning your limbs to gold. Time slows, for here  
we are millionaires, backhanding the night

so nothing dark will end our shining hour,  
no jewel hold a candle to the cuckoo spit  
hung from the blade of grass at your ear,  
no chandelier or spotlight see you better lit

than here. Now. Time hates love, wants love poor,  
but love spins gold, gold, gold from straw.

**Carol Ann Duffy**

Meaning

# MITSL: Hour

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|

Structure

Tone

Language

Imagery

## Catrin

I can remember you, child,

As I stood in a hot, white

Room at the window watching

The people and cars taking

Turn at the traffic lights.

I can remember you, our first

Fierce confrontation, the tight

Red rope of love which we both

Fought over. It was square

Environmental blank, disinfected

Of paintings or toys. I wrote

All over the walls with my

Words, coloured the clean squares

With the wild, tender circles

Of our struggle to become

Separate. We want, we shouted,

To be two, to be ourselves.

Neither won nor lost the struggle

In the glass tank clouded with feelings

Which changed us both. Still I am fighting

You off, as you stand there

With your straight, strong, long

Brown hair and your rosy

Defiant glare, bringing up

From the heart's pool that old rope,

Tightening about my life,

Trailing love and conflict,

As you ask may you skate

In the dark, for one more hour.

**Gillian Clark**

Meaning

# MITSL: Catrin

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Structure

Tone

Language

Imagery

## Brothers

Saddled with you for the afternoon, me and Paul  
ambled across the threadbare field to the bus stop,  
talking over Sheffield Wednesday's chances in the Cup  
while you skipped beside us in your ridiculous tank-top,  
spouting six-year-old views on Rotherham United.

Suddenly you froze, said you hadn't any bus fare.

I sighed, said you should go and ask Mum  
and while you windmilled home I looked at Paul.

His smile, like mine, said I was nine and he was ten  
and we must stroll the town, doing what grown-ups do.

As a bus crested the hill we chased Olympic Gold.

Looking back I saw you spring towards the gate,  
your hand holding out what must have been a coin.

I ran on, unable to close the distance I'd set in motion.

**Andrew Forster**



Meaning

# MITSL: Brothers

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## Extract from Out of the Blue

You have picked me out.  
Through a distant shot of a building burning  
you have noticed now  
that a white cotton shirt is twirling, turning.

In fact I am waving, waving.  
Small in the clouds, but waving, waving.

Does anyone see  
a soul worth saving?

So when will you come?  
Do you think you are watching, watching  
a man shaking crumbs  
or pegging out washing?

I am trying and trying.  
The heat behind me is bullying, driving,  
but the white of surrender is not yet flying.  
I am not at the point of leaving, diving.

A bird goes by.  
The depth is appalling. Appalling  
that others like me  
should be wind-milling, wheeling, spiralling, falling.

Are your eyes believing,

believing

that here in the gills

I am still breathing.

But tiring, tiring.

Sirens below are wailing, firing.

My arm is numb and my nerves are sagging.

Do you see me, my love. I am failing, flagging.

**Simon Armitage**

Meaning

# MITSL: Out of the Blue

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