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Teacher Guide 99

Compare how poems convey similar ideas

You are learning to:

- make detailed comparisons between two poems.

At GCSE level, you will be asked to compare the ways in which two poets create mood and explore or present similar themes in their work.

Getting you thinking

Read this first section of a poem.

Preludes

I

The winter evening settles down
With smell of steaks in passageways.
Six o'clock.
The burnt-out ends of smoky days.
And now a gusty shower wraps
The grimy scraps
Of withered leaves about your feet
And newspapers from vacant lots;
The showers beat
On broken blinds and chimney-pots,
And at the corner of the street
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.
And then the lighting of the lamps.

T. S. Eliot

Top Tip

Take your ideas a stage further by 'zooming in' on particular key words and using them to shape your interpretation.



- 1 In pairs, discuss the following questions.
 - a) What does this poem seem to be about?
 - b) What is the poem's setting?
 - c) What mood or atmosphere does the poem create?

How does it work?

Read what one student has written about the poem:

The poet conveys a sense of deadness by referring to 'withered leaves'. The adjective 'withered' suggests decay but also an absence of life, an effect also suggested by the 'lighting of the lamps' which is an act done anonymously.

Now you try it

Read the opening of this poem:

1.2

Friday Night in the Royal Station Hotel

Light spreads darkly downwards from the high
Clusters of lights over empty chairs
That face each other, coloured differently.
Through open doors, the dining-room declares
A larger loneliness of knives and glass
And silence laid like carpet. A porter reads
An unsold evening paper. Hours pass,
And all the salesmen have gone back to Leeds,
Leaving full ashtrays in the Conference Room.
In shoeless corridors, the lights burn.

Philip Larkin

- 2 In pairs, find three pieces of evidence that suggest absence or loneliness in the poem. (For example, the word 'loneliness' itself, an image, a detail, a weary rhythm or tone.)
- 3 Now compare how the two poems deal with the themes of absence and loneliness. You could start with a general comment, followed by specific details:

Both poems deal with absence. The first takes an exterior scene, referring to the 'vacant lots', while the second describes an interior setting with 'empty chairs', conveying a lifeless or lonely tone.

- 4 Write a sentence or two about loneliness or absence of life in the poems. Begin with a general statement, and then add specific points. Use the prompts below to help with your comparison.

Each poem... / Both poets also... / Another similarity between the poems is... / Whilst the first poem... the other...

Apply your skills

- 5 Write up a full comparison of the poems in five paragraphs. Make sure you use at least one quotation to back up each point, and explain its effect on the reader.

Top Tip

Remember that you can move from the broad similarities between two writer's approaches to the finer differences.

Check your progress:

Some progress >>

I can read across both poems and pick out the most relevant points.

Good progress >>>

I can compare specific ideas in the poems, referring to relevant quotations

Excellent progress >>>>

I can explore the impressions that different poems make on a reader, comparing them with apt quotations.

Understand, describe, select or retrieve information, events or ideas from text and use quotation and reference to text

Identify and comment on emotive language

You are learning to:

- identify emotive language, what emotions it stirs up, and how effective it is.

‘Emotive’ language deliberately stirs up the feelings of the reader or listener. It can be used in political speeches, leaflets or essays, and in adverts that encourage people to support campaigns for change – for example, to end child poverty. It is also used in poetry.

Getting you thinking

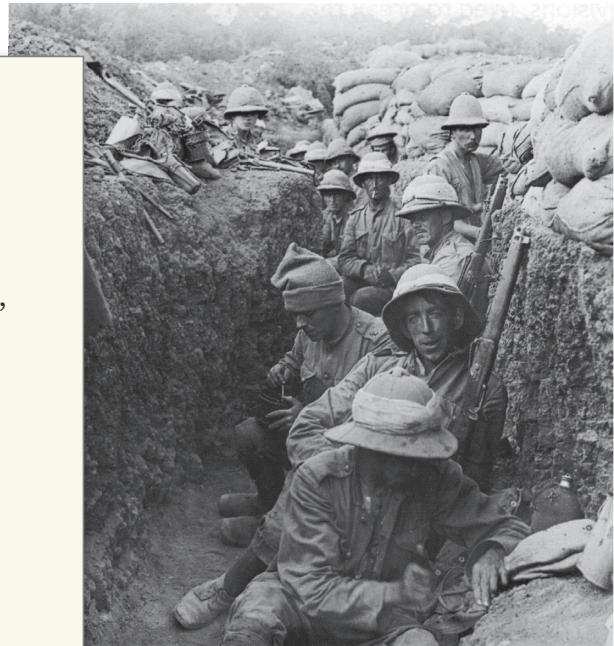
Read the poem below, written by Wilfred Owen in reaction to the day-to-day killing in World War I.

Anthem for Doomed Youth

What **passing-bells** for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles’ rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty **orisons**.
No **mockeries** now for them; no prayers nor bells,
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, –
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad **shires**.

What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The **pallor** of girls’ brows shall be their **pall**;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

Wilfred Owen



Top Tip

Emotive language can provoke different emotions – such as anger, guilt, sympathy or hope.

- 1 Which words and phrases in the poem do you find emotive?

How does it work?

You don’t need to understand every word of this poem to get a sense of its mood, and of the kind of emotions the poet wanted to arouse.

To comment on the poem, first look at the emotive phrases and consider what the poet is suggesting.

Glossary

passing-bells: funeral bells

orisons: prayers

mockeries: ceremonies that would seem meaningless in the circumstances

shires: counties

pallor: paleness

pall: funeral sheet

Emotive phrase	What it suggests
'die as cattle'	This image suggests that the men are treated as if they are no more important than cattle, and have as little choice in their fate.
'monstrous anger of the guns'	This image makes the guns themselves sound angry, hinting at the aggression that has caused the war; 'monstrous' suggests something huge, ugly and immoral.

Now you try it

- 2 Discuss with a partner how Wilfred Owen's choice of words in the last six lines of the poem encourages the reader to feel sad about the war.
- Who might the girls be, and why is there 'pallor' on their 'brows'?
 - Why are there no flowers for the soldiers, but simply 'patient minds'?
 - What does the 'drawing-down of blinds' suggest? Who would be drawing the blinds down'?

Apply your skills

The following poem, by Siegfried Sassoon, is about the moment when World War I ended.

Everyone Sang

Everyone suddenly burst out singing;
And I was filled with such delight
As prisoned birds must find in freedom,
Winging wildly across the white
Orchards and dark-green fields; on – on – and out of sight.

Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted;
And beauty came like the setting sun:
My heart was shaken with tears; and horror
Drifted away... O, but Everyone
Was a bird; and the song was wordless; the singing will
never be done.

Siegfried Sassoon

- 3 Write about the emotions the poem arouses in you as a reader, and how the poet's choice of words helps achieve this.



Check your progress:

Some progress >

I can identify emotive language.

Good progress >>

I can identify how emotive language arouses particular emotions.

Excellent progress >>>

I can discuss and evaluate the effectiveness of emotive language.

Explain and comment on writer's use of language, including grammatical and literary features at word and sentence level