Unseen poetry: Companionship

Teacher guidance · 32 marks

Apply best fit to the whole response. These are possible routes, not required points; reward other interpretations supported by the poems. Q27.1 assesses AO1 and AO2, Q27.2 AO2 only. Biographical context and comparison are not required in 27.1.

Question 27.1 - 24 marks: AO1 and AO2

The paired commands and contrasting responses establish an apparently certain rule about how other people behave; evaluate the speaker’s sweeping claims rather than treating them as proven facts.

The earth, hills and echoes give social rejection a wider imagined setting. Sound returns for joy but fails to answer suffering.

The nectar/wine and gall opposition makes pleasure attractive and pain bitter; the repeated you draws the reader into the warning.

The movement from laughter to death intensifies the isolation. Contrast crowded halls and a large train of people with the narrowing final passage; regular patterns can make the warning seem memorable and relentless.

Indicative assessment bands

21-24: A sustained interpretation with precise evidence; perceptive exploration of how language, form and structure shape the response.

17-20: A developed interpretation supported by well-chosen details; thoughtful explanation of methods and their effects.

13-16: A clear, supported understanding; explanation of relevant poetic choices and meanings.

9-12: Some explained ideas and relevant references; some explanation of how particular choices work.

5-8: A simple relevant response with supporting details; basic comments about poetic choices.

1-4: A few relevant observations; limited reference or recognition of a poetic choice.

0: No relevant response.

Question 27.2 - 8 marks: AO2 comparison

Compare the repeated antitheses in Solitude with Brontë’s sustained rose/holly contrast: both classify kinds of social experience through opposing images.

Wilcox’s sound imagery presents other people withdrawing from pain; Brontë’s seasonal plant imagery imagines one relationship that can endure winter.

Both address the reader and offer advice, but Wilcox’s final narrowing image stresses individual suffering while Brontë’s green garland offers continuing companionship.

Indicative assessment bands

7-8: A precise, insightful comparison explaining how different or similar poetic choices create meaning.

5-6: A developed comparison explaining effects of relevant methods in both poems.

3-4: Relevant connections with some comment on how methods affect meaning.

1-2: A simple connection or observation about one or both poems, with limited attention to methods.

0: No relevant response.

Text credits

Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Solitude (Poems of Passion (1883)).

Emily Brontë, Love and Friendship (The Complete Poems of Emily Brontë (1908), VII).