Unseen poetry: Travel and attention

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 conversational Yes and first-person recollection make a small event sound personally significant before the speaker explains it.

The brief sentences, pauses and ordinary sounds slow the poem down. The negative statements about arrivals and departures remove the expected activity of a station.

The plant list changes the focus from a railway label to the natural surroundings; consider how repeated And allows details to accumulate.

The final movement expands from one nearby blackbird to imagined birds across two counties. The contrast between a minute and a wide landscape makes stillness an enlargement of attention, not simply inactivity.

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

Contrast Thomas’s pauses and conversational movement with Stevenson’s driving rhythm, rhyming pairs and repeated Faster; method embodies different speeds of attention.

Both accumulate natural and human details. Thomas settles on ordinary stillness, while Stevenson’s repeated Here/there keeps replacing one glimpse with another.

Compare the expansive final birdsong with the emphatic final disappearance: a stopped journey creates a continuing connection, while moving observation remains fleeting.

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

Edward Thomas, Adlestrop (Poems by Edward Thomas (1917), p.40).

Robert Louis Stevenson, From a Railway Carriage (A Child’s Garden of Verses (1885), XXXVII).