

Table of Past Questions on Studied Poetry

This table may help you to get an idea of the types of questions asked in previous Junior Certificate examinations.

| Topics | '13 | '12 | '11 | '10 | '09 | '08 | '07 | '06 | '05 | '04 | '03 | '02 | '01 |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Poem which deals with an important issue. | | | | X | | | | | | | | | |
| Poem(s) you would recommend. | X | | X | X | | | | | | X | | | |
| War or peace. | | | | | X | | | | | | | | |
| Interesting place or time / World around us | X | | X | | X | | | | X | | | X | |
| Person/People | X | | X | | | X | | | | | X | X | |
| Sound effects or musical qualities. | | | | | | X | | | | | | | |
| Poem which captures the imagination. | | | | | | | X | | | | | | |
| Interesting title / features/imagery. | | | | | | | X | | | | X | | |
| Wishes / thoughts/feelings | | X | | | | | | X | | | | | |
| Favourite poet. | | X | | | | | | X | | | | X | |
| Compare two poems with a similar theme. | | | | | | | | | | | | | X |
| Youth or old age. | | | | | | | | | X | | | | |
| Love. | | | | | | | | | | X | | | |
| Interesting language | | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Relationships | X | | | | | | | | | | | | |

- You are always asked to give the name of the poem(s) and the name of the poet.
- You cannot use the unseen poem as your studied poem. However, examiners are well aware of the poems frequently chosen for study in the Junior Cert, so are unlikely to choose one of those as an unseen poem. If it should happen that the unseen poem is one you have studied, then you must choose another poem to use in your Studied Poetry answer. This should not pose a problem, as most students have a good knowledge of between six and twelve poems.
- Always check the marks allotted to each part of each question. These can vary from year to year.
- You will almost certainly be asked to comment on the language used in the poem. Even if you are not overtly asked to do so, it would be appropriate to devote at least one paragraph of your answer to the language, or mention it in each point if possible.
- Learn and use your key literary terms. (See page 195 in my book for a list of these.)

Past Questions on Studied Poetry – 2001 to 2013

2012 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. You have been invited to contribute to a radio programme. The programme's topic is:

Why young people should read poetry.

Write the text of the talk you would give. Support your views with detailed reference to two of the poems that you have studied. (30)

OR

2. From the poetry you have studied, choose a poem that revealed something new to you about one of the following topics:

People or Relationships or The World Around Us.

(a) In the poem, what did you learn about your chosen topic that was new?

Explain your answer with reference to the poem. (10)

(b) How did the poet's use of language help to reveal something new to you about your chosen topic? You may wish to consider some of the following: imagery; tone or mood; the structure of the poem or any other feature of language. Support your answer with reference to the poem. (20)

2012 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. From the poetry you have studied, choose one poem in which the poet uses interesting language to convey powerful thoughts and feelings.

(a) What powerful thoughts and feelings are conveyed by the poet in your chosen poem?

Support your answer with reference to the poem. (15)

(b) Explain what you find interesting about the language used by the poet in the poem you have chosen. Support your answer with reference to the poem. (15)

OR

2. From the poetry you have studied choose a poet whose work impressed you.

(a) What topics or themes does the poet deal with in the poetry that you have studied?

Support your answer with reference to the work of your chosen poet. (15)

(b) Explain why you find the work of your chosen poet impressive. Give reasons for your answer with reference to his or her poetry. (15)

2011 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. From the poetry you have studied, identify a poem in which you feel the poet brings a person, a place or a thing vividly to life.

(i) Describe the person, the place or the thing brought vividly to life by the poet. (10)

(ii) In your opinion, what words or phrases used by the poet are the most effective in bringing the person, place or thing to life? Give reasons for your answer. (20)

OR

2. Imagine you have been asked by your teacher to choose a poem to read to your class as part of a poetry reading event.

(i) Identify the poem you would choose and explain why you believe your class would enjoy this particular poem. (10)

(ii) Suggest ways to make the reading of your chosen poem as interesting and engaging as possible for your audience. Explain why you believe your suggestions would help to make the poem interesting and engaging for your classmates. You might consider some of the following in your answer: the use of props or costumes or visuals or music, etc. (20)

2010 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. Choose a poem you have studied in which the poet deals with an important issue.

(a) Explain what the poet had to say about the important issue in the poem. (15)

(b) What insights into the issue did you get from studying this poem? (15)

Explain your answer with reference to the poem.

OR

2. Imagine you have to recommend one poem that you have studied for a new publication entitled, *A Book of Favourite Poems for Young People of the 21st Century*.

Name the poem you would choose and explain why this particular poem would be suitable for inclusion in this collection.

In your answer you may wish to consider some of the following; the poem's theme, the way the poet uses language, the use of imagery, tone and/or mood, the structure of the poem, etc.

(30)

2009 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. Select a poem you have studied which deals with either war OR peace.

(i) What does the poet say about either war or peace in the poem? Support your answer by reference to the poem. (15)

(ii) What effect did this poem have on you? Explain your answer with reference to the poem. (15)

OR

2. Poetry offers us a way to explore places we have never been, foreign lands and different

cultures. Choose a poem you have studied which creates such a place.

(i) Describe the place created in this poem.

Support your answer with reference to the poem. (15)

(ii) Would you like to live there?

Explain your answer with reference to the poem.

2008 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. Choose any poem you have studied which created vivid images of a person in your mind.

(a) Describe what images of the person come to mind from your chosen poem. (10)

AND

(b) Write about how two of these images contribute to your understanding of the person in this poem. (20)

OR

2. Choose any poem you have studied which has interesting sound effects or musical qualities.

Describe these sound effects or musical qualities and explain how they enrich the poem. (30)

2007 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. Choose any poem you have studied which is “wonder-filled” or captures the “whoosh of the imagination”.

(i) Describe what happens in this poem. (15)

(ii) How does the poet fill the poem with wonder or show the imagination at work? (15)

OR

2. Choose a poem that you think has an interesting title.

(i) Considering the poem as a whole explain how the title is interesting. (15)

(ii) Name two other features of your chosen poem which appeal to you and explain why they appeal to you. (15)

2006 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. Take any poem you have studied which deals with wishes *or* thoughts.

(a) What are the poet's main wishes **OR** thoughts in the poem?

(b) Describe how *either* the imagery *or* the language of the poem contributes to the poet's expression of his/her thoughts or wishes. Explain your answer with reference to the poem. (30)

OR

2. If you could invite a poet of your choice to your school, who would you choose?

(a) Explain your choice of poet with reference to the poet's work.

(b) Choose your favourite poem by this poet and explain why you like it so much.

Support your answer by reference to the poem. (30)

2005 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. From the poetry you have studied choose a poem which is set in an interesting time or place.

(a) Describe this setting. (10)

(b) What does this setting contribute to the effectiveness of the poem?

Give reasons for your answer based on evidence from the poem. (20)

OR

2. From the poetry you have studied choose a poem which deals with either Youth or Old Age.

(a) What picture does this poem give of either youth or old age? (10)

(b) What is your personal response to the picture of youth or old age given in the poem?

Support your answer with reference to the poem. (20)

2004 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. Being in love has always inspired men and women to express their feelings in verse.

Select a love poem you have studied.

(a) Describe what happens in this poem.

(b) How does the lover express her/his feelings?

(c) Would you like to have this poem written for you for St.Valentine's Day? Give reasons for your answer. (30)

OR

2. It is said that every reader brings to the same poem a new life.

Choose a poem you have studied which has a special and very personal meaning for you.

(a) Explain why this poem has a special meaning for you?

Describe how the poet has made it possible for you, the reader, to identify with the message in this poem.

(b) What is there in the language and imagery of the poem that attracts you? (30)

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2003 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. "Poetry can tell us what human beings are"-Maya Angelou.

(a) Select a poem you have studied which deals with a human being.

Outline the picture you get of this person from the poem. (15)

(b) How has the poet created this picture?

Support your answer by reference to or quotation from the poem you have studied. (15)

OR

2. Select a poem you have studied where imagery is very powerful.

(a) What, for you, was the message of this poem? (15)

(b) Describe how the imagery helped to develop this message.

Support your answer by reference to or quotation from the poem you have studied. (15)

2002 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. Michael Hartnett once said that poetry gave him the power to love and celebrate.

- Select a poem you have studied which celebrates a person, place or thing.
- Give a brief outline of the theme of the poem.
- How is the sense of celebration created?

OR

2. From the poetry you have studied choose the poet you liked best of all. Explain why you liked this poet's work and support your answer by reference to his/her poetry.

2001 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer questions **1,2 and 3.**

- 1.** What, in your opinion, is the main point of this poem? Support your answer by reference to the poem.
- 2.** Discuss the language **or** rhythm of the poem and say what you think the language or rhythm contributes to the effect of the poem.
- 3.** Did you like the poem? Give reasons for your answer.

Sample Answers

2010 Imagine you have to recommend one poem that you have studied for a new publication entitled, *A Book of Favourite Poems for Young People of the 21st Century*.

Name the poem you would choose and explain why this particular poem would be suitable for inclusion in this collection.

In your answer you may wish to consider some of the following; the poem's theme, the way the poet uses language, the use of imagery, tone and/or mood, the structure of the poem, etc.

Note: This is a good option to choose because the question contains the bones of the plan you could use: '... consider some of the following; the poem's theme, the way the poet uses language, the use of imagery, tone and/or mood, the structure of the poem, etc.'

You should read the question very carefully before you begin planning your answer. Notice the way you are asked to choose a poem which would be suitable for young people. Every point you make about the poem should link back to that aspect of the question.


As this is a thirty mark question, you should aim to make six points in your answer, if possible. Five strong points would be fine too, and better than repeating yourself or going off the point in order to find a sixth point. Use your own judgement and common sense here, and remember that an introduction does not count as a point. The same applies to a conclusion.

Plan:

1. Introduction: 2006 survey – favourite poem – good reason – speaks to us all
2. Theme: all young people relate to idea of escape. Yeats wrote poem when young
3. Imagery: creates ideal world. Lovely vision and good for today's young people as it is a natural world he describes. Far from internet etc. Meditation
4. Language: beautiful, rich, evocative. No text-speak! Alliteration etc. Musical qualities
5. Structure: rhyme scheme creates a sense of harmony and peace
6. Tone: wistful and celebratory. Young people relate to former and find hope in latter
7. Overall effect: uplifting, food for thought in today's fast-paced world etc
8. Conclusion: poem deserves its place, would like to see it popular for years to come

Sample answer:

When I was asked to choose a poem for inclusion in *A Book of Favourite Poems for Young People of the 21st Century*, I didn't have a moment's hesitation in picking W.B. Yeats' *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*. I am not alone in loving this poem: it topped the poll in an Irish Times survey of the nation's favourite poems in 2006, and deservedly so. While the poem has a universal appeal, I believe that its message is of particular relevance to today's young people, and the beautiful way this message is expressed makes *The Lake Isle* a pleasure to read.




The opening lines of the poem reflect the wording of the question. The language is persuasive/positive.

The theme of the poem is one to which young people can easily relate: after all, who among us has not fervently wished that we could escape our busy classrooms or study halls, and be transported to a place so peaceful that the sounds of nature could be clearly heard? Instead of the shouts of students and the rumble of traffic outside, wouldn't it be wonderful to be somewhere where the buzzing of insects would seem loud, and the whirring flight of tiny songbirds would make the evening appear 'full of the linnet's wings'?

Yeats' ideal is centred on nature and a simple life where he will live in a 'small cabin... of clay and wattles made', and will need nothing more to sustain him than 'nine bean rows' and 'a hive for the honeybee'. In an overly-materialistic age when young

people are constantly under pressure to keep up with the latest and greatest developments in technology and so on, I think it is wonderful to read a young man's vision of perfection as being somewhere beautiful, natural and simple. In an era when we are constantly in contact with others on phones, Facebook and Twitter, I think we would do well to consider taking a little time out and perhaps find some time to ourselves to meditate on what is really important in life. We may not have the chance to 'live alone in the bee-loud glade', but perhaps we could switch off for a little while, at least.

The alluring images Yeats' creates in this poem are greatly enhanced by his



Don't forget to use quotes to support your answer. Short quotes are best.

skilful use of rich and evocative language. Again, in a time when we are bombarded with abbreviated text-speak and sloppy expression, I feel it is important for young people to see the power that language can have to fuel our imaginations and appeal to our senses. Yeats' vivid descriptions bring the Lake Isle to life for us, and we share his longing for a place where 'midnight's all a-glimmer, and noon a purple glow'. This is a poem that I would encourage all young people to read aloud because of its wonderful musical qualities. The soft 'l' and 's' sounds in the alliterative 'I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore' perfectly capture the peace and communion with nature that is Yeats' dream.

Be sure to use key literary terms in your poetry answer.

Even the structure of this poem adds to its beauty. The regular ABAB rhyme scheme reflects the harmony and serenity that the poet sees in his beloved Innisfree where 'peace comes dropping slow'.

Short paragraphs are fine, but even in a short paragraph, you can include a quote.

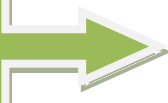
Links between paragraphs make your answer flow.

This sense of peace and Yeats' love for the place where he spent some of his happiest hours are a large part of what makes this poem so appropriate for a young audience. Like many of us, Yeats is not completely happy at the time of writing; he has no desire to be on 'the pavements grey', and he is filled with longing for the idyllic Isle of Innisfree. This wistful tone is one which I certainly relate to, and I am sure I'm not alone in this. However, the poem is, above all, a celebration of Yeats' favourite place. His vision sustains him when he is homesick, and this is a very positive message for young people. We too should focus on all that is good in life and when we are feeling stressed or unhappy, perhaps we will be – like Yeats – lucky enough to have somewhere special to meditate on, a place that we too can feel in 'the heart's deep core'.

You must keep referring back to the question. Explain why each point is relevant for today's young people.

Overall, this is an uplifting, inspirational, beautifully crafted poem which appeals to us just as it has to generations of Irish readers. Culturally, this is an important poem and I think it is appropriate for all young Irish people to learn about, and hopefully identify with, our literary heritage.

Your conclusion should relate back to your introduction.



In conclusion, then, I believe that The Lake Isle of Innisfree deserves its place in any poetry anthology for today's young people, and I am confident that its place there will ensure that it remains firmly at the top of the list of Ireland's favourite poems.

2011 Junior Certificate Examination

Answer EITHER 1 OR 2 which follow.

1. From the poetry you have studied, identify a poem in which you feel the poet brings a person, a place or a thing vividly to life.

(i) Describe the person, the place or the thing brought vividly to life by the poet. (10)

(ii) In your opinion, what words or phrases used by the poet are the most effective in bringing the person, place or thing to life? Give reasons for your answer. (20)

a) I believe that the Lake Isle of Innisfree is brought to life very vividly in W.B. Yeats' poem of the same name. Yeats describes an idyllic, peaceful little island in the west of Ireland: a place where he longs to escape to when he is standing on 'the pavements grey' in London.

The island Yeats describes is a place of great natural beauty and his greatest wish is to live a self-sufficient life in this haven. He will grow his own food there, take honey from his hives, and 'live alone in the bee-loud glade'.

No matter what the time of day or night, the island is a serene and lovely place. The mists of morning hang like a veil over the island, and the fall of the dew gives the impression that 'peace comes dropping slow' there. Midday brings sunshine, and the purple heather is a blaze of colour, evening is full of the whirr of linnet's wings, and at night the stars fill the sky: 'midnight's all a glimmer'.

b) This poem is filled with vivid descriptions and imagery which bring Yeats' vision to life for us.

The first phrase which really brought the Lake Isle to life for me is in the second stanza. He describes the mist at daybreak as 'the veils of the morning', and this beautiful metaphor is most effective in capturing the gentle haziness of the start to another serene, perfect day on Innisfree. I can easily imagine the dew dropping slowly, like peace itself, from these gauzy veils.

Another phrase which caught my eye and made me think more deeply about the scene Yeats creates is 'evening full of the linnet's wings'. I thought this was a most unusual image in that I expected the poet to mention the bird's song rather than the noise its wings make as it flies. However, when I examined the line more closely, I found that it actually conjured up an even more peaceful scene than a description of birdsong ever could. The reason for this is that I was forced to think about how quiet it must be on the island if the whirr of this little bird's wings can fill the air.

The final image which transports me to the Lake Isle and makes me share Yeats' longing for it is in the last stanza. Recalled again to the present, Yeats says that his longing for Innisfree is with him 'night and day'. When he is standing 'on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,' the poet still hears, deep within him, 'lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore'. The soft, alliterative 'l', and 's' sounds emphasise the tranquillity of the scene, while the repetition of the consonants mirrors the repetitive motion of the water as it gently moves forward and back. The assonance in this line, combined with the fact that the vowel sounds are broad, again reinforces the slow pace of life on the island, where the only sound is the small waves of the lake lapping against the shore.

Yeats' description of the Lake Isle is so wonderfully evocative that I can completely understand why this place was somewhere that he carried with him always, 'in the deep heart's core.'