1.7 Literature: Comparative Essay

AQA 7712 · about 220 minutes · Write-in edition

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

Two Original Poems for Comparison: 'The Tide Clock' and 'Low Water'

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TEXT A: The Tide Clock (a modern poem in free verse)

My mother kept no clock that told the hour,
only the tide, hauling itself up the sand
in its slow grey shawl, and back again,
patient as breath.

She taught me to read the mudflats
the way other children learned their letters:
the ribbed sand a paragraph, the gulls
a line of urgent commas.

At nine, at three, the water arrived
and she would stand at the door, salt on her sleeves,
counting the hours she had left
to counting at all.

Now I keep the tide tables in a drawer
I never open. I trust my phone instead,
its confident blue numbers, its refusal
to smell of anything.

But some mornings I wake certain
the room has filled with water,
that if I put my hand out

it would come back wet.

I am learning, too late, that grief
is not a wave that arrives and breaks.
It is the pull between two tides,
the going out that never quite finishes
before the coming in begins.

Somewhere she is still standing at the door,
still salt, still patient,
still telling the only time
that ever mattered.

TEXT B: Low Water (a poem in ballad form, ABCB rhyme)

She walks the harbour wall at dusk
where fishing nets lie coiled and slack,
and counts the boats that still sail in,
and counts far more that don't come back.

Ten years the tide has kept its word,
arriving twice with clockwork grace,
while he who vowed he would return
has broken faith with time and place.

The old almanac on her shelf
still marks the day his ship set sail;
she will not tear that fortnight out
though every other week grows dull.

The children ask her why she waits
where cold sea wind can find no cure.
She tells them time is not a line
but water, endless and obscure.

It goes, it turns, it comes again
in shapes no calendar can hold,

and somewhere in its turning tide

the young, she says, are never old.

So let the harbour clock strike on,

let almanacs grow soft with damp;

she keeps her hour by low water

and waits, unmoved, beneath its lamp.

1 Before you compare the two poems, check your understanding of some key terms used in comparative literary analysis.

(a) Define the term 'extended metaphor', giving a brief example of how one might be used in a poem about grief or loss. **(2)**

(b) Define the term 'volta' and explain what it usually signals in a poem. **(2)**

(c) Define 'quatrain' and explain what is distinctive about a 'ballad stanza' compared with a quatrain in general. **(2)**

(d) Define 'slant rhyme' (also called 'half rhyme') and give one reason a poet might choose to use it instead of a full rhyme. **(2)**

(Total for Question 1 is 8 marks)

2 Refer to TEXT A, 'The Tide Clock', for this question.

(a) Identify four words or phrases from across the whole poem that belong to a semantic field of measuring or telling time. **(4)**

(b) Explain the effect of the simile 'patient as breath' at the end of stanza 1. **(3)**

(c) Explain how the metaphor of reading in stanza 2 ('the ribbed sand a paragraph, the gulls / a line of urgent commas') presents the mother's teaching of the speaker. **(3)**

(Total for Question 2 is 10 marks)

3 Refer to TEXT B, 'Low Water', for this question.

(a) Identify four words or phrases from across the whole poem that belong to a semantic field of time or measurement (for example, calendars or clocks). **(4)**

(b) Explain the effect of the repetition and parallel structure in 'and counts the boats that still sail in, / and counts far more that don't come back' (stanza 1). **(3)**

(c) Explain how the slant rhyme (half rhyme) of 'sail' and 'dull' in stanza 3 contributes to meaning. **(3)**

(Total for Question 3 is 10 marks)

4 Both poems use the tide as a way of thinking about time from their very first lines. Compare how each poet introduces this idea in the opening of their poem.

(Total for Question 4 is 10 marks)

5 Refer to both poems for this question.

(a) Compare how the two poets use images of water to suggest different kinds of emotional disturbance or unease. **(6)**

(b) Compare the final images of each poem ('still telling the only time / that ever mattered' in Text A, and 'waits, unmoved, beneath its lamp' in Text B) and their effect on the reader. **(6)**

(Total for Question 5 is 12 marks)

6 Compare the structure and form the two poets choose, considering why each might suit their subject.

(Total for Question 6 is 12 marks)

7 Using your wider knowledge of how poets have often used the sea and tide as symbols of time, mortality or separation, compare what the two poems suggest about coping with loss.

(Total for Question 7 is 12 marks)

8 Compare how the two poets use voice and perspective to shape the reader's understanding of time and loss.

(Total for Question 8 is 20 marks)

9 'Both poems ultimately suggest that time cannot heal loss, only change its shape.' Comparing the methods used by both poets, discuss how far you agree with this view.

(Total for Question 9 is 20 marks)

10 Some readers view the woman in 'Low Water' as a figure of quiet strength and devotion; others view her as trapped by an idealised past. Compare how the two poets present their central figures' relationship to time and memory, showing awareness of different ways the poems can be interpreted.

(Total for Question 10 is 20 marks)

11 A critic has argued: 'Poems that use the tide as a metaphor for grief risk reducing loss to something too neat and cyclical, when in reality grief is unpredictable.' Using both poems, and your wider understanding of how poets present grief, evaluate how far you agree with this view, comparing the methods of both poets.

(Total for Question 11 is 25 marks)

12 'Text A presents grief as a private, ongoing negotiation; Text B presents it as a public, completed performance.' Compare the presentation of grief in the two poems, evaluating the extent to which you agree with this view and showing awareness of alternative readings.

(Total for Question 12 is 25 marks)

Mark scheme · 1.7 Literature: Comparative Essay

Question 1

(a) Accurate definition: a metaphor that is developed and sustained across several lines or the whole text, rather than a single, isolated comparison, oe **B1**

(a) Valid example showing understanding, e.g. picturing grief throughout a poem as the ebb and flow of the tide, oe **B1**

(a) Answer: An extended metaphor is a comparison developed and sustained across several lines or a whole poem, e.g. presenting grief throughout as the ebb and flow of the tide rather than a single wave.

(b) Accurate definition: a turn or shift in a poem's argument, tone or perspective, oe **B1**

(b) Valid explanation of what it usually signals, e.g. a change in the speaker's understanding, a movement from problem to resolution, or a shift in tense or focus, oe **B1**

(b) Answer: A volta is a turn or shift in a poem's argument, tone or perspective, often signalling a change in the speaker's understanding or a movement from one idea or tense to another.

(c) Accurate definition of quatrain: a stanza of four lines, oe **B1**

(c) Valid distinctive feature of a ballad stanza, e.g. typically rhymes ABCB with alternating longer and shorter lines and a narrative, storytelling tone, oe **B1**

(c) Answer: A quatrain is a four-line stanza. A ballad stanza is a particular kind of quatrain, typically rhyming ABCB with alternating longer and shorter lines, and is strongly associated with narrative, storytelling verse.

(d) Accurate definition: an imperfect or approximate rhyme where the end sounds are similar but not identical, oe **B1**

(d) Valid reason, e.g. to create a sense of unease, imperfection or unresolved tension, or to subtly disrupt an otherwise regular form, oe **B1**

(d) Answer: Slant rhyme (half rhyme) is an imperfect rhyme where end sounds are similar but not identical. Poets may use it to create a sense of unease or unresolved tension, or to subtly disrupt an otherwise regular form.

Question 2

(a) 'no clock that told the hour' / 'clock' (stanza 1) **B1**

(a) 'counting the hours' (stanza 3) **B1**

(a) 'tide tables' (stanza 4) **B1**

(a) 'confident blue numbers' (stanza 4); accept any other single word or short phrase clearly from the semantic field of measuring time, oe **B1**

(a) Answer: clock, counting the hours, tide tables, confident blue numbers

(b) **L2** Clear explanation of the effect of the simile, linking the tide's rhythm to something involuntary and life-sustaining, with relevant textual support. **3**

(b) **L1** Simple or general comment that the simile suggests calm or patience, with little development of its wider effect. **1-2**

(b) **L0** No rewardable material. **0**

(b) Indicative content:

- Comparing the tide's rhythm to breathing suggests something involuntary, essential and life-sustaining, rather than a mechanical or arbitrary process.
- The short final line of the stanza, 'patient as breath', isolates the phrase and gives it its own quiet weight, slowing the poem's pace to enact the patience it describes.
- Associating the mother with the tide's breath-like rhythm reframes her way of marking time as natural and embodied, contrasting with the clock and phone introduced later in the poem.

(b) Answer: The simile compares the tide's rhythm to breathing, suggesting something involuntary and life-sustaining, and associates the mother with a natural, embodied way of marking time rather than a mechanical one.

(c) **L2** Clear explanation of how the reading metaphor presents the mother as a teacher of an alternative, natural literacy, with relevant textual detail. **3**

(c) **L1** Simple or general comment that the mother taught the speaker about nature, with little reference to the reading/literacy comparison. **1-2**

(c) **L0** No rewardable material. **0**

(c) Indicative content:

- Comparing the landscape to a text ('a paragraph') suggests the mother taught the speaker to 'read' nature as intently as language, positioning her as an alternative source of authority to conventional schooling.
- 'Urgent commas' introduces movement and urgency into the reading metaphor, suggesting the natural world requires active, careful interpretation rather than passive observation.
- The comparison to how 'other children learned their letters' implies this was a distinct, perhaps unusual, form of upbringing, foregrounding the mother's particular relationship with tide and time as something deliberately passed on.

(c) Answer: The reading metaphor presents the mother as teaching the speaker an alternative literacy, reading the natural world as attentively as language, with 'urgent commas' suggesting this required active, careful interpretation.

Question 3

(a) 'Ten years' (stanza 2) **B1**

(a) 'almanac' (stanza 3) **B1**

(a) 'no calendar' (stanza 5) **B1**

(a) 'harbour clock' (stanza 6); accept any other single word or short phrase clearly from the semantic field of time or measurement, oe **B1**

(a) Answer: Ten years, almanac, no calendar, harbour clock

(b) **L2** Clear explanation of the effect of the repeated verb and parallel structure, linking it to the woman's ritualistic waiting and foreshadowing her own loss. **3**

(b) **L1** Simple or general comment that the woman counts boats, with little explanation of the repetition's effect. **1-2**

(b) **L0** No rewardable material. **0**

(b) Indicative content:

- The repetition of 'counts' emphasises the obsessive, ritualistic quality of her daily watching, suggesting counting has become a compulsive habit rather than a simple activity.
- The parallel structure sets up an implicit imbalance between the boats that return and those that 'don't come back', foreshadowing her personal loss before it is directly stated later in the poem.
- The counting motif quietly connects her private grief to the tide's own regular, repeated rhythm, reinforced by the poem's consistently patterned form.

(b) Answer: The repeated 'counts' and parallel structure emphasise the ritualistic, compulsive nature of her waiting and set up an imbalance between returning and lost boats that foreshadows her own loss.

(c) **L2** Clear explanation of the effect of the slant rhyme, linking the imperfect sound to the imperfect resolution of her grief, with reference to the poem's usual rhyme. **3**

(c) **L1** Simple identification that the rhyme is not exact, with little explanation of its effect. **1-2**

(c) **L0** No rewardable material. **0**

(c) Indicative content:

- The imperfect rhyme creates a subtle dissonance appropriate to the unresolved nature of her grief, in contrast with the fuller rhymes elsewhere in the poem ('grace'/'place', 'cure'/'obscure').
- This small formal strain mirrors the emotional strain of preserving the one fortnight in the almanac she cannot let go of, while everything else 'grows dull'.
- The near-rhyme softly undercuts the otherwise neat, ordered ballad form, hinting that her ritual of waiting is not entirely comfortable or complete.

(c) Answer: The slant rhyme of 'sail' and 'dull' creates a subtle dissonance, mirroring the emotional strain of her unresolved grief and slightly disrupting the otherwise neat ballad form.

Question 4

Level 4 Perceptive, well-developed comparison of both openings, exploring subtle similarities and differences in how the tide/time idea is introduced, with sophisticated textual detail from both poems. **9-10**

Level 3 Clear comparison of the two openings with relevant textual support from both poems. **6-8**

Level 2 Some relevant comparative comment with reference to both poems, but analysis may be thin or one-sided. **3-5**

Level 1 Simple, general or largely one-poem response with limited comparison. **1-2**

Level 0 No rewardable material. **0**

Indicative content:

- Text A opens with a direct statement, 'My mother kept no clock that told the hour, / only the tide', immediately establishing the tide as a replacement timekeeper through personal, intimate, first-person memory.
- Text B opens with an observed scene, 'She walks the harbour wall at dusk', building situation and character through third-person narrative description before the tide/time comparison is made explicit in stanza 2, 'Ten years the tide has kept its word'.
- Text A's free verse and immediate, declarative claim create a sense of intimacy and philosophical directness from the first line.
- Text B's more gradual, narrative unfolding, typical of ballad convention, delays the explicit time comparison, building situation and mood first.
- Both openings ultimately establish the tide as an alternative or resistant form of timekeeping compared with clocks or calendars, but arrive at this idea through contrasting structural pacing (immediate versus delayed) and voice (confessional versus observed).

Question 5

(a) **L3** Clear, well-supported comparison of water imagery in both poems, identifying genuine similarity and/or difference with apt textual detail from both. **5-6**

(a) **L2** Some relevant comparison with reference to both poems, though development may be uneven or one poem may be treated in more depth. **3-4**

(a) **L1** Simple or general comment, possibly on only one poem, with limited comparison. **1-2**

(a) **L0** No rewardable material. **0**

(a) Indicative content:

- Text A's surreal image, 'the room has filled with water... it would come back wet', suggests disorientation and the uncanny intrusion of grief into ordinary domestic space.
- Text A's rejection of the wave 'that arrives and breaks' in favour of 'the pull between two tides' presents an image of unresolved, ongoing movement rather than a single dramatic event.
- Text B's opening image, 'nets lie coiled and slack', suggests dormancy and emptiness, an absence of catch that quietly anticipates absence of a different kind.
- Text B's statement 'water, endless and obscure' is more direct and almost proverbial, giving its unease an explained, didactic quality, in contrast with Text A's more immersive, dreamlike unease.

(a) Answer: Text A's water imagery creates immersive, dreamlike disorientation, while Text B's is more emblematic and stated outright, giving the two poems contrasting kinds of unease despite a shared central image.

(b) **L3** Clear, well-supported comparison of the two closing images, identifying genuine similarity and/or difference with apt textual detail from both poems. **5-6**

(b) **L2** Some relevant comparison with reference to both poems, though development may be uneven. **3-4**

(b) **L1** Simple or general comment, possibly on only one poem, with limited comparison. **1-2**

(b) **L0** No rewardable material. **0**

(b) Indicative content:

- Text A's repeated 'still' (used four times in the final stanza) suggests a lingering, almost spectral presence of the mother, offering a gentle, quietly comforting resolution despite unresolved grief.
- 'The only time / that ever mattered' elevates emotional, tidal time over clock time as a final, explicit value judgement made by the speaker.
- Text B's ending is more static and visual, positioning the woman almost as a fixed monument, inviting a more ambivalent reader response of admiration or concern.
- 'Unmoved' carries a double meaning of physical stillness and emotional refusal to move on, contrasting with Text A's softer, more accepting final tone.

(b) Answer: Text A's ending offers a gentle, almost comforting sense of the mother's lingering presence, while Text B's ending is more static and ambiguous, using 'unmoved' to suggest both physical stillness and emotional refusal to move on.

Question 6

Level 4 Perceptive, well-developed comparison of structure and form, exploring subtle similarities and differences with sophisticated textual detail and critical vocabulary. **10-12**

Level 3 Clear comparison of structure and form with relevant textual support from both poems. **7-9**

Level 2 Some relevant comparative comment with reference to both poems, but analysis may be thin or one-sided. **4-6**

Level 1 Simple, general or largely one-poem response with limited comparison. **1-3**

Level 0 No rewardable material. **0**

Indicative content:

- Text A's free verse, irregular line lengths (down to the short line 'patient as breath'), a single five-line stanza among otherwise four-line stanzas, and heavy enjambment mirror the unpredictable, non-linear experience of memory and grief.
- The shift to short, isolated lines at key emotional moments in Text A acts as a kind of structural pause or breath within the poem.
- Text B's six regular quatrains in ABCB rhyme create a steady, controlled, almost ritualistic form, appropriate to the woman's disciplined, repetitive waiting and to the ballad tradition of narrating loss at sea.
- The single instance of slant rhyme ('sail'/'dull') in Text B marks a small but telling disruption to this otherwise tightly controlled form.
- Text A's looser form enacts instability and an ongoing, unresolved process, while Text B's tighter form enacts endurance and ritual, though both poems use their final stanza to return to their central tidal image.

Question 7

Level 4 Perceptive, well-developed comparison that draws convincingly on wider contextual understanding of tide/sea symbolism and applies it to both poems with sophisticated textual detail. **10-12**

Level 3 Clear comparison with relevant contextual awareness and appropriate textual support from both poems. **7-9**

Level 2 Some relevant comparative comment with limited or generalised contextual awareness, and reference to both poems, but analysis may be thin. **4-6**

Level 1 Simple, general or largely one-poem response with limited comparison and little contextual awareness. **1-3**

Level 0 No rewardable material. **0**

Indicative content:

- Both poems draw on a long-standing literary convention of the sea/tide as an emblem of the passage of time, mortality and separation, familiar from the tradition of maritime elegy and from poetry that uses tidal rhythm as an analogy for continuity beyond individual human lives.
- Text A situates this convention in a modern, domestic, technological context (smartphone versus tide tables), suggesting a tension between inherited, natural ways of marking grief and contemporary life.
- Text B situates the same convention within a more traditional, communal setting (harbour, almanac, children asking questions), suggesting grief and waiting are passed on and witnessed publicly, closer to a ballad's storytelling function.
- Text A explores coping with loss as a private, interior negotiation between old and new ways of marking time, while Text B explores it as a public, almost ritualised performance of endurance.
- Despite these differences, both poems ultimately present time in relation to grief as cyclical (the going out and coming in of tides) rather than linear, resisting the idea that loss can simply be 'moved past'.

Question 8

Level 5 A sophisticated, well-substantiated comparison of voice and perspective across both poems, exploring subtle effects with precise textual detail and assured critical vocabulary. **17-20**

Level 4 A convincing comparison of voice and perspective with clear analysis of effect and well-chosen textual support from both poems. **13-16**

Level 3 A clear comparison with relevant analysis of some effects of voice and perspective and appropriate textual support. **9-12**

Level 2 Some relevant comment on voice or perspective with limited comparison and thin textual support. **5-8**

Level 1 A simple, general response with minimal reference to the poems and no meaningful comparison. **1-4**

Level 0 No rewardable material. **0**

Indicative content:

- Text A's first-person, confessional voice creates intimacy and allows for uncertainty and self-correction in real time ('I am learning, too late, that grief...'), inviting the reader to share the speaker's ongoing process of understanding.
- Shifts between past tense (childhood memories of the mother) and present tense (the speaker's current life) without clear temporal markers create a fluid, associative sense of time that mirrors memory itself.
- Text B's more distanced third-person narrative voice, closer to a ballad's storyteller tradition, presents the woman as observed from outside, inviting the reader to judge or interpret her situation rather than share it directly.
- The woman's direct speech in Text B ('she tells them time is not a line / but water') is reported rather than her own first-person confession, adding a layer of narrative mediation between the reader and her feelings.
- Text A's intimate first person creates empathy and complicity in uncertainty, whereas Text B's external, narrated perspective creates a more evaluative distance, closer to parable or moral tale; this difference in voice fundamentally shapes how directly each poem allows the reader to inhabit grief versus observe it from outside.

Question 9

Level 5 A sophisticated, well-substantiated argument that engages directly and critically with the statement, comparing a wide range of methods across both poems with precise, apt textual detail and assured critical vocabulary; a fluent, well-structured personal response.	**17-20**
Level 4 A convincing, clearly argued response to the statement, comparing several methods across both poems with well-chosen textual support; clearly organised.	**13-16**
Level 3 A clear response to the statement with relevant comparison of methods and textual support, though development may be less consistent across the two poems.	**9-12**
Level 2 Some relevant engagement with the statement and some comparison of the poems, but points may be underdeveloped or comparison limited.	**5-8**
Level 1 A simple, general response with minimal reference to the poems and no meaningful comparison.	**1-4**
Level 0 No rewardable material.	**0**

Indicative content:

- Candidates might agree that both poems present time as non-linear or cyclical rather than something that resolves grief: Text A's closing metaphor, 'the pull between two tides, / the going out that never quite finishes / before the coming in begins', explicitly denies that grief is a single wave that 'arrives and breaks'.
- Text B's ending, 'she keeps her hour by low water / and waits, unmoved,' suggests ten years have changed nothing but the ritual around her grief, supporting the idea that time only changes its shape rather than removing it.
- However, Text A's speaker shows some development, 'I am learning, too late, that grief / is not a wave', suggesting a degree of insight or changed understanding even if the underlying grief endures, which complicates a flat reading of 'time cannot heal'.
- Text B's use of present tense throughout, and her address to the children, might suggest the woman has found a philosophy that gives her waiting meaning, which some readers might interpret as a form of adaptation or coping rather than pure stasis.
- Strong responses should interrogate the terms of the statement (what counts as 'healing' versus 'changing shape') and reach a substantiated, comparative judgement, using close, precise reference to both poems throughout rather than treating them in sequence.

Question 10

Level 5 A sophisticated, well-substantiated comparison that engages directly with both named interpretations, weighs evidence for and against each, compares across both poems with precise textual detail, and reaches a clear, well-justified position.	**17-20**
Level 4 A convincing comparison that addresses both interpretations with clear analysis of methods and well-chosen textual support from both poems.	**13-16**
Level 3 A clear response that engages with at least one interpretation, with relevant comparison of methods and appropriate textual support.	**9-12**
Level 2 Some relevant comment on interpretation with limited comparison and thin textual support.	**5-8**
Level 1 A simple, general response with minimal reference to the poems and no meaningful engagement with interpretation.	**1-4**
Level 0 No rewardable material.	**0**

Indicative content:

- Interpretation of strength: the woman's teaching of the children, 'she tells them time is not a line / but water', can be read as wisdom and quiet dignity, a philosophical acceptance rather than denial of loss.
- Interpretation of entrapment: her refusal to 'tear that fortnight out' of the almanac and her description as 'unmoved' could instead suggest stasis and an inability to move forward, defined entirely by absence.
- The woman is never named, only 'she', which could be read either as universalising her experience of grief or as denying her individual identity and agency.
- In Text A, the speaker shows more evident change and self-questioning across the poem ('I am learning, too late'), though some might argue the haunting final image, 'Somewhere she is still standing at the door', shows the speaker is equally unable to let go, just expressed through more fluid, uncertain form.
- Strong answers will directly address both named interpretations of the woman in Text B, weigh evidence for and against each, compare this with Text A's more visibly developing speaker, and reach a reasoned position while acknowledging valid alternative readings.

Question 11

Level 6 A sophisticated, well-substantiated evaluation that engages directly and critically with the critic's claim, comparing a wide range of methods across both poems with precise, apt textual detail, relevant contextual understanding and assured critical vocabulary; a fluent, well-structured personal response reaching a clear, weighed judgement.	**21-25**
Level 5 A convincing evaluation of the claim, comparing several methods across both poems with well-chosen textual support and some relevant contextual awareness; clearly organised.	**17-20**
Level 4 A clear response to the claim with relevant comparison of methods and textual support, though development may be less consistent across the two poems.	**13-16**
Level 3 Some relevant engagement with the claim and some comparison of the poems, but points may be underdeveloped or comparison limited.	**9-12**
Level 2 A largely descriptive or narrative response with limited engagement with the claim and little effective comparison.	**5-8**
Level 1 A simple, general response with minimal reference to the poems and no meaningful comparison.	**1-4**
Level 0 No rewardable material.	**0**

Indicative content:

- Candidates might agree that the shared tidal metaphor imposes a certain neatness, since both poems repeatedly return to regular, patterned imagery (Text A's structured stanza breaks; Text B's regular quatrains and rhyme), which could be seen as over-ordering the genuinely chaotic experience of grief.
- However, candidates might counter that both poets actively resist this neatness: Text A explicitly rejects a simple, resolved image of grief ('not a wave that arrives and breaks') in favour of a more genuinely unpredictable, unresolved image ('the pull between two tides, / the going out that never quite finishes'), suggesting the poet is alert to the risk the critic identifies.
- Text B's single instance of slant rhyme ('sail'/'dull') and its persistent uncertainty over resolution ('she will not tear that fortnight out') could be read as small but telling disruptions to its own orderly form, suggesting the poem is aware the woman's grief exceeds the neat ritual she has built around it.
- Strong answers will bring in wider knowledge of how grief is conventionally represented in poetry, for example the tension between using extended natural or cyclical metaphor for containment and comfort, versus poetry that deliberately fractures form to enact grief's disorder, and use this to evaluate the critic's claim.
- The best responses will compare both poems' methods (form, imagery, voice) throughout and reach a substantiated, weighed judgement rather than a one-sided agreement or rejection of the critic's view.

Question 12

Level 6 A sophisticated, well-substantiated evaluation that interrogates both halves of the statement, offers genuine alternative readings, compares a wide range of methods across both poems with precise, apt textual detail and assured critical vocabulary, and reaches a clear, well-justified final judgement.	**21-25**
Level 5 A convincing evaluation of the statement, engaging with alternative readings and comparing several methods across both poems with well-chosen textual support.	**17-20**
Level 4 A clear response to the statement with relevant comparison of methods and textual support, though engagement with alternative readings may be limited.	**13-16**
Level 3 Some relevant engagement with the statement and some comparison of the poems, but points may be underdeveloped or comparison limited.	**9-12**
Level 2 A largely descriptive or narrative response with limited engagement with the statement and little effective comparison.	**5-8**
Level 1 A simple, general response with minimal reference to the poems and no meaningful comparison.	**1-4**
Level 0 No rewardable material.	**0**

Indicative content:

- Candidates might initially agree that Text A is more private and ongoing, given its first-person, present-tense uncertainty and lack of any named audience, whereas Text B's woman performs her grief in front of 'the children' who 'ask her why she waits', making her mourning explicitly witnessed and, through her spoken explanation, didactic and public.
- However, the strongest responses will challenge the neatness of this binary: Text A's poem is itself a form of public performance, a published, structured poem implicitly addressed to a reader, which undermines the idea that it is purely 'private'.
- Similarly, Text B's public ritual could be read as concealing rather than completing her grief, since 'she tells them' a controlled, philosophical account that might defend against, rather than express, her actual private feeling; the poem never gives direct access to her interior thought, unlike Text A's confessional 'I'.
- Candidates might also question 'completed', since the woman's grief clearly persists after 'Ten years', and question 'ongoing negotiation' as potentially too gentle a description of Text A's more disorientating imagery of intrusive grief ('the room has filled with water').
- The best responses will use precise, comparative evidence from both poems (choice of pronoun and voice, form, direct versus reported speech, imagery) throughout, directly interrogate both halves of the critical statement, and reach a sustained, personal, well-substantiated judgement.