

AQA AS Level English Literature

Activities and Exam Practice

High Windows



© These free sample pages may be copied and used but not sold or repackaged in any form.

www.qaresources.co.uk

2. Work on the collection (cont'd)

How? What weapons did the suspect use?

Train yourself to spot the poetic techniques the poet uses. The marking schemes reward you for using 'an appropriate critical vocabulary'. Train yourself to use the correct technical terms.

Technique 1: Sound and rhythm

Some of a writer's techniques work, like music, with sound and rhythm. Examples of such devices are listed below. Sometimes they work to create a mood. Sometimes they actually recreate a sound effect, such as birdsong or gunfire. Often they do both. Make sure you understand each of the terms and think of others involving sound and rhythm.

Box 1: Sound and rhythm

Rhyme	Alliteration	Enjambment	Onomatopoeia
Rhythm	Caesura	Assonance	Sibilance



Activity 7: Sound and rhythm

1. Print out and cut up Box 1 above, making a pile of 'cards'
2. Mix up or shuffle the cards
3. Now choose or deal an item from the list
4. See how quickly you can find **THREE** examples of the technique named
5. Explain what each contributes to the poem's meaning
6. To take this competition to a higher level, take **TWO** devices and see if you can find them in combination
7. Then explain what each contributes to the poem's meaning.

2. Work on the collection (cont'd)

How? What weapons did the suspect use? (cont'd)

Technique 2: Comparisons

Some poetic devices work as comparisons. Often these comparisons are between something abstract that Larkin wants to convey to his readers and something concrete which can be appreciated by the senses and which, he hopes, you already know about. The intention is that, by making the comparison, you will understand the abstract concept (the thing you can't see or hear). The key terms here are:

Simile

Metaphor

Symbol

Make sure you understand how these comparisons work.

(a) Similes

A simile is a direct comparison using 'like', 'as' or 'as if'.



Activity 8: Similes

Find the important similes in:

- the last stanza of *To the Sea*
- the first of *The Building*
- the penultimate stanza of *High Windows*
- *Friday Night*
- the last stanza of *This Be the Verse*
- the last stanza of *How Distant*
- the third stanza of *Sad Steps*

These are not the only ones.

- 1. Look at each simile carefully and think about what it is aiming to do. You can see (or in one case hear) all of them.**
- 2. Draw the similes you find and then try to explain how they help you understand the abstract concept (the thing you can't see or hear).**

My favourite image in the whole collection is the 'coastal shelf' at the end of *This be the Verse*. Here Larkin compares the abstract idea of hereditary misery, which I find very difficult to grasp, to the way in which the land slopes into and beneath the surface of the sea. In the first two lines of the third verse the language changes dramatically, the vowels lengthen to slow and smooth the pace and he uses alliteration and this unexpectedly specific simile to show the descent, scale, inevitability and permanence of the 'misery' he feels people hand on to others.

2. Work on the collection (cont'd)

How? What weapons did the suspect use? (cont'd)

(b) Metaphors

In a metaphor, writers do not make an obvious comparison; they slide the ideas associated with one thing into their description of something else.

Note: The use of the word 'slide' in the previous sentence is in itself an example of a metaphor as it is a way of trying to explain something abstract – how a metaphor works – in concrete terms in the hope that the reader will better understand the term.



Activity 9: Metaphors

Metaphors in this collection are as rare and special as the similes. See if you can spot some. Look at:

- the beginning of *Forget What Did*
- Section 2 of *Living's* (there is personification here – a particular kind of metaphor)
- the last stanza of *The Old Fools*
- the beginning of *The Building*
- the beginning of *Dublineseque Solar*
- The end of *Show Saturday*
- *Cut Grass*

As with similes, match the abstract and concrete components of the metaphor using the box below. Extend the box, if necessary

Poem	Metaphor	Abstract idea	Concrete comparison
<i>Forget What Did</i>	'stun to memory'	Having no memories	Being whacked on the head and knocked unconscious – an idea that everyone understands, from experience or from seeing it on film or TV.