Poem Detectives: Conventions and Mood

Teacher		**Class**	Year 7
Subject	English	**Topic**	Analysing a poem
Date		**Room**	
Lesson length	60 minutes	**Country**	United Kingdom

Students learn to spot poetic conventions and explain their effects. They analyse The Empty House and link imagery to mood.

Curriculum links

- recognising a range of poetic conventions and understanding how these have been used

Learning objectives

- Students will recognise similes, metaphors, personification, stanzas and sound devices.
- Students will explain how word choice and imagery shape mood using poem evidence.

Success criteria

- I can name conventions I spot with evidence from the poem.
- I can explain their effect on feeling using because sentences.

What students already know

Ask: What makes writing a poem, not a story? List any tricks poets use, like rhyme or comparisons.

Key words

simile	a comparison that uses the words like or as [4]
metaphor	describing one thing as if it is another thing [4]
personification	describing a thing as if it were alive [4]
stanza	a set of lines grouped together in a poem [5]
mood	the overall feeling a poem gives, such as gloomy or joyful [5]

Materials

- Slide pack 1-5, 7, 9-12
- Poem extracts: printed copies of The Empty House stanzas 1-4 (Worksheet page 4)
- Mood word cards
- Coloured pencils
- Worksheet Task E and Task F
- Mini whiteboards

Before the lesson

- Print The Empty House stanzas 1-4 and Worksheet Tasks E and F, one per pair
- Print and cut mood word cards: joyful, melancholy, gloomy, angry, lonely
- Set out coloured pencils and mini whiteboards
- Test Slides 7, 9, 11 and 12 on the classroom display

Lesson outline

0–5 min **Starter** 5 min · Whole class

To hook interest and surface first ideas about imagery and mood.

YOU DO

1. Display Slide 11 with the line about fire red as a fox.
2. Say the hook and ask pairs to point on an imaginary thermometer from joyful to gloomy.
3. Take three quick votes and ask what picture the comparison puts in their mind.
4. Link answers to today's detective job: spot conventions and crack feeling.

STUDENTS DO

1. Point on their thermometer to show joyful, gloomy or angry.
2. Discuss with a partner what is described and what picture they see.
3. Share one idea about the feeling with the class.

Say: Is this poem joyful, gloomy or angry? Point your thermometer — no sitting on the fence. Talk to your partner for 30 seconds: what picture does the red comparison give you, and what feeling does it add?

Ask: What is described and which convention is used? (A fire, described with simile and repetition to stress redness.) · What feeling does the repeated red give? (Intense, alarming or powerful, because red suggests heat and danger.)

Check understanding: Scan thermometers and listen for simile and feeling words; if unsure, model the red as a fox picture again before moving on.

Support: Show three faces for joyful, gloomy and angry so students can point to match feeling. **Stretch:** Ask students to suggest one adjective that would make the line feel calmer and why.

Use: Slide 11

5–17 min **Teaching** 12 min · Whole class

To teach a range of conventions and model how they shape meaning and feeling.

YOU DO

1. Use Slides 3-5 to recap simile, metaphor and personification with quick actions for each.
2. Display Slide 10 key words and read each meaning together.
3. Model analysis of Stanza 1 of The Empty House on the board using the because sentence.
4. Think aloud about stanza and sound choices and how they link to mood.

STUDENTS DO

1. Join in to label lonely as a cloud as simile and fluttering and dancing as personification.
2. Copy the model annotation and because sentence for Stanza 1.
3. Show on whiteboards whether a new line is simile, metaphor or personification.

Say: Poets choose pictures and sounds on purpose. A simile compares using like or as [4]. A metaphor says one thing is another thing, and personification describes an object as if it were alive [4]. The way stanzas are split up is also part of form and structure [5].

Worked example: Line: Its tall windows stare like blind eyes, Step 1: spot like so it is a simile, a comparison using like or as [4]. Step 2: windows are compared to blind eyes. Step 3: this makes the reader feel gloomy and uneasy because blind eyes suggest emptiness and no one looking out.

Ask: How do you know lonely as a cloud is a simile? (It compares using as, making a quick, clear picture [4].) · What two things are linked when leaves are called a crowd that danced? (Leaves and people; crowd is a metaphor and danced is personification giving lively movement.) · How does soft, sad, sighing draughts shape sound and feeling? (Repeated s makes sibilance, a hissing s or sh sound [5], which feels sad and whispery.)

Check understanding: Use whiteboards: show S, M or P for three lines; reteach signal words like and as if similes are missed.

Support: Keep simile, metaphor and personification definitions on the board with one colour-coded example each. **Stretch:** Ask students to explain why blind eyes feels sadder than dark windows.

Use: Slides 3-5, 10

17–45 min **Main activity** 28 min · Pairs

Students will link word choice and imagery to mood.

YOU DO

1. Give each pair Stanzas 1-3 of The Empty House, mood word cards and coloured pencils.
2. Show Slide 7 timeline and Slide 9 task: underline one image, label the convention, note stanza choice, write feels... because...
3. Model placing Stanza 1 on the joyful to gloomy thermometer and underlining positive or negative language [5].
4. Time the work in three 8-minute bursts and circulate to prompt evidence and structure talk.

STUDENTS DO

1. Place Stanzas 1-3 on the thermometer and agree a mood label for each.
2. Underline one image per stanza, label simile or personification, and circle strong sound words.
3. Write one sentence per stanza: this makes the reader feel... because... using evidence.

Say: You are mood detectives. Place each stanza on your thermometer from joyful to gloomy. Underline positive or negative language and images such as similes and metaphors that create the atmosphere [5]. Think what the poet establishes at the start, builds on in the middle, and ends with [3].

Worked example: Stanza 2: I wandered past as slow as a cloud / And heard the gate creak a thin hello. Simile as slow as a cloud shows slow loneliness. Personification in gate creak a thin hello makes the house seem alive but weak. Stanza sits near gloomy and lonely because the sounds are thin and tired.

Ask: Which words best prove your mood label? (Negative words like silent, cold, sighing, empty, or soft, sad, sighing sounds.) · What does the poet establish, then build on? (Establishes an old, alone house; builds on with moving leaves, whispers and watching objects [3].)

Check understanding: Collect one because sentence per pair mid-task; if labels lack evidence, direct pairs back to two underlined words before continuing.

Support: Give a mood bank with definitions and an example image for each mood. **Stretch:** Students find one word that shifts the mood and explain what would happen if it were removed.

Use: Slides 7, 9 and Worksheet Task E

45–60 min **Plenary** 15 min · Whole class

To check secure naming of conventions and explanation of effect.

YOU DO

1. Return to Slide 2 objectives and ask pairs to rate themselves against the two I can statements.
2. Run Slide 12 true or false, correcting the idea that free verse must rhyme.
3. Ask pairs to complete Worksheet Task F summary by filling blanks with correct terms.
4. Take final answers and link back to analysing a poem.

STUDENTS DO

1. Vote true or false with reasons, correcting to free verse does not have to rhyme.
2. Complete Task F summary using simile, metaphor, personification, stanza and mood.
3. Share one labelled example and its effect with the class.

Say: Let us check our detective work. Free verse does not rhyme or keep a regular rhythm, so it does not have to rhyme [4]. Finish your summary with the right terms, then tell your partner one convention and its effect using because.

Ask: A simile compares using like or as. True or false? (True; signal words make the comparison clear.) · Free verse must rhyme and keep regular rhythm. True or false? (False; free verse does not have to rhyme or keep regular rhythm [4].)

Check understanding: Mark Task F together and use thumbs up for each success criterion; re-explain any term most pairs missed.

Support: Provide Task F word bank with the five key terms and first letters filled. **Stretch:** Ask students to add one extra sentence explaining how structure from opening to ending changes feeling.

Use: Slides 2, 12 and Worksheet Task F

Common mistakes

Mistake	How to spot it	How to fix it
Calling any comparison a simile, even without like or as	Labels metaphor as simile despite no signal word	Check for like or as first [4]; if one thing is called another, name it metaphor.
Thinking free verse must rhyme	Says a poem cannot be free verse because it does not rhyme	Remind that free verse does not rhyme or have regular rhythm [4]; rhyme is a choice.
Naming the device without explaining effect on mood	Underlines simile but writes no feeling or because reason	Insist on feels... because... linked to positive or negative language and images [5].

Support

- Pre-highlight like, as and human actions in Stanza 1 so signals are visual
- Provide sentence starters: This is... It compares... It makes the reader feel... because...

Stretch

- Rewrite one simile as a metaphor and argue which image feels stronger
- Suggest where to add a stanza break in Stanza 3 and justify the change in emphasis

For the LSE or teaching assistant

Sit with target pairs in main task; prompt underlining of like/as and human verbs, read mood bank aloud and scribe because sentences where needed.

Created with LessonDino.com · AI lesson planner with checkable sources

Check for understanding

Question	Answer
Name one simile from The Empty House and what it compares.	Its tall windows stare like blind eyes; windows compared to blind eyes.
Give one example of personification and its effect.	The gate creak a thin hello; makes the house seem lonely but alive.
Free verse must rhyme. True or false, and why?	False; free verse does not have to rhyme or keep regular rhythm.

Homework

Find one simile or personification in any song or book and write what feeling it creates and why.

Sources

1. Year 7 English Curriculum Overview · smrt.bristol.sch.uk · https://www.smrt.bristol.sch.uk/_site/data/files/why-smrt/curriculum/curriculum-areas/ks3/curriculum-overview/KS3-English-Curriculum-Overview-031024.pdf
2. National curriculum in England: English programmes of study · assets.publishing.service.gov.uk · https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7de93840f0b62305b7f8ee/PRIMARY_national_curriculum_-_English_220714.pdf
3. Analysing a poem in detail in the Eduqas anthology · thenational.academy · https://www.thenational.academy/teachers/programmes/english-secondary-ks4-eduqas/units/poetry-anthology-continued-study-1483/lessons/analysing-a-poem-in-detail
4. Analysing poems - English - Learning with BBC Bitesize · bbc.co.uk · https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zdw83j6
5. Analysing poems - Comparing unseen poems - WJEC - GCSE English ... - BBC · bbc.co.uk · https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zg7jwxs/revision/2