



stanza by stanza, device by device



What a poetry question actually tests

- a stanza-explanation question wants the **literal sense** first, then what it suggests, not a paraphrase alone
- a device question names the device, quotes the exact words, then explains the effect it creates
- a theme question asks what the poem is finally saying about its subject, stated in your own words
- tone matters as much as meaning, a poem's attitude to its subject often carries half the marks

Reading a poem for the answer

- read once for the literal picture, once for what that picture stands for
- mark where the poem's mood shifts, a change in rhythm or word choice usually signals it
- a repeated word or image across stanzas is rarely accidental, note what it builds
- the closing lines usually carry the poem's final stand, read them twice

Poem

Poet

Built to teach

A Photograph	Shirley Toulson	time and loss, read through one small image
The Laburnum Top	Ted Hughes	a single scene made to carry a larger idea
The Voice of the Rain	Walt Whitman	a cycle explained through a speaker who is not human
Childhood	Markus Natten	a search traced across several short questions
Father to Son	Elizabeth Jennings	distance between two people, said without stating it outright

Stanza explanation vs device question *

Stanza explanation



a root box labelled *Stanza* branching down to four labelled children: *Picture*, *Suggestion*, *Tone*, *Link to theme*

- give the literal picture the lines paint first
- then say what that picture suggests beyond itself
- keep it in your own words, a lifted line earns nothing

Poetic device



three stops in order along a dashed path: *Name it*, *Quote it*, *Explain effect*, the sequence a device answer follows

- name the device precisely, simile, metaphor, personification, alliteration
- quote the exact words that carry it
- explain the effect, what it makes the reader feel or picture

a device question with no quoted words earns half of what it could

