

five poems, the extract and the appreciation



The five poems

Telephone Conversation

Wole Soyinka, a dramatic monologue in which a landlady's questions about skin colour expose casual racism through dark humour

Tithonus

Alfred Lord Tennyson, a mythic figure granted eternal life but not eternal youth, pleading to be released from his own immortality

Beethoven

Shane Koyczan, the composer's deafness read as a story about creating beauty from within silence and struggle

Small Towns and the River

Mamang Dai, a river's steady permanence set against the small, passing griefs of the town beside it

Death Be Not Proud

John Donne, a sonnet that argues death has no real power, since it is itself only a passage, not an end

Poetry extract and activities, what the extract asks

- an extract question tests the same reading skills as prose, complete a line, state a meaning, pick the right paraphrase
- a choose the correct alternative question is testing inference, the wrong options usually restate the line too literally
- picking out lines for a table rewards a slow first read rather than skimming for a keyword
- a line asked to be rewritten in your own words should keep the poem's meaning, not just swap a few words for synonyms

Reading a poem before answering *

- read the poem aloud once in full before touching a question, the rhythm often carries meaning prose misses
- note who the poem addresses and who speaks it, Telephone Conversation is a dramatic monologue built on one side of a call
- underline the shift if there is one, from humour to anger, from longing to weary acceptance, from grief to defiance
- a glossed word at the margin is there because the question will likely use it too



three steps in order along a dashed path, read aloud, note the shift, then answer