

# GCSE English revision booklet

Name:..... Class:.....

## About your revision booklet


### First things first...


The three most important things you need to remember are:

1. Start your revision in plenty of time and plan your time carefully.
2. Ask for help at school when you need it.
3. Enlist the help of your family and friends. They will want you to do well!

### What the symbols mean...

Throughout this booklet each page is marked in the top right hand corner with one of the following symbols. This indicates the **length of time** the tasks on that page should take.

If this **egg-timer** symbol  appears in the corner of a page, it means that the tasks on that page are very short. You should spend no **more than 10-15 minutes on each task** before moving on. **That means that these tasks are a good way of revising if you only have a short amount of time available.** If you complete one task a day between now and your exams you will have achieved a lot without even realising it!

If this **clock symbol**  appears in the corner of the page, it means that the tasks on that page require longer written responses, or will take a little more time to complete.

In the run-up to your English exams you should plan your revision time carefully. These tasks will help you make the most of that time.

## What this booklet contains...

Throughout this booklet you'll find a variety of different tasks to help you in your revision. These tasks belong to one of three categories:

<b>Skills</b>	These tasks will help you in all your English papers.
<b>Reading and Writing</b>	This section will help you in preparing for the following sections of your exam: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Paper One:</b> Section A - <i>Media and non-fiction</i></li> <li>• <b>Paper One:</b> Section B - <i>Writing to Argue, Persuade or Advise</i></li> <li>• <b>Paper Two:</b> Section B - <i>Writing to Inform, Explain or Describe.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Poetry from Different Cultures</b>	These tasks will help you in preparing for <b>Paper Two:</b> Section A - <i>Poetry from Different Cultures.</i>

## How you can revise

In preparing for your English exams there are a lot of things that you can do to help you achieve all that you are capable of.

1. **Review your class notes.** Everything that you do in your English lessons will be preparing you for your GCSE English exam. Review your class notes carefully, making sure that you understand everything that you have covered. If you aren't sure about something ask your teacher as soon as possible.
2. **Practise answering exam questions in timed conditions.** Timed essay practice is very important. There are lots of past exam questions and exam style questions in this booklet. Simply pick one, check how long you should spend on it and set your timer. If you do one or two a week you'll make a big difference. Bring any work you do into school and your English teacher will mark it for you.
3. **Revise your poetry.** Make sure you know your different cultures poetry well. Re-read the poems frequently and think carefully about your response to them. Try to make links between the poems, looking for similarities and differences in the ways that they handle their subject matter.
4. **Make sure you understand key terms.** You will have learnt lots of terminology during your lessons. Make sure you understand all of your key terms. You should be able to identify techniques that a writer employs and discuss the effects that these have on the reader.
5. **The internet** has some good revision sites. Try BBC GCSE Bitesize to start with.

## GCSE English Paper One Section B: practice questions



You should spend 45 minutes on each of these questions. Remember:

- spend 5 minutes planning your response
- make sure that you use paragraphs
- check your work carefully at the end
- write about two sides of A4 in average sized handwriting.

‘Books are dead.’ **Argue** for or against this point of view.

Write a letter to a friend either **persuading** them to read a book that you have read recently or to watch a television series that you have seen.

You are a celebrity who has won an award for your work. Write the text for your speech in which you **advise** young people about pursuing their dreams.

Write an article for a parents’ magazine **arguing** for or against the idea that too many examinations put unnecessary pressure on children. Go on to **advise** parents how to support children preparing for an examination.

‘School uniform should be abolished.’ **Argue** for or against this point of view.

You are collecting money for a charity. Write a letter to your head teacher **persuading** him to let you hold a fund raising event in school.

You have been asked to write a page for your school intranet that provides **advice** on starting secondary school. Your piece should be aimed at new Year 7 students.

### Question tree

This is one technique that you can use to help you plan an essay. Spend five to ten minutes on your plan.

- Look at the **question** at the base of the **tree trunk**.
- Now think about the **key ideas** you would need to include in an answer to that question; these key ideas become the **branches** of your tree.
- To answer any question fully you need to **explain** your ideas and include **quotations**; the **twigs** on the tree become your explanation and evidence.



Look at the front pages of a tabloid newspaper and a broadsheet newspaper. Compare how each one uses presentational devices.

This is one technique that you can use to help you plan an essay. Spend five to ten minutes on your plan.

- Look at the **question** at the base of the **tree trunk**.
- Now think about the **key ideas** you would need to include in an answer to that question; these key ideas become the **branches** of your tree.
- To answer any question fully you need to **explain** your ideas and include **quotations**; the **twigs** on the tree become your explanation and evidence.



Write a letter to your local MP persuading them to provide more facilities for teenagers in your area.

This is one technique that you can use to help you plan an essay. Spend five to ten minutes on your plan.

- Look at the **question** at the base of the **tree trunk**.
- Now think about the **key ideas** you would need to include in an answer to that question; these key ideas become the **branches** of your tree.
- To answer any question fully you need to **explain** your ideas and include **quotations**; the **twigs** on the tree become your explanation and evidence.



You have been asked to write a leaflet for new students to your school, providing them with the information that they need before they start.

This is one technique that you can use to help you plan an essay. Spend five to ten minutes on your plan.

- Look at the **question** at the base of the **tree trunk**.
- Now think about the **key ideas** you would need to include in an answer to that question; these key ideas become the **branches** of your tree.
- To answer any question fully you need to **explain** your ideas and include **quotations**; the **twigs** on the tree become your explanation and evidence.



Describe the room that you are in.

This is one technique that you can use to help you plan an essay. Spend five to ten minutes on your plan.

- Look at the **question** at the base of the **tree trunk**.
- Now think about the **key ideas** you would need to include in an answer to that question; these key ideas become the **branches** of your tree.
- To answer any question fully you need to **explain** your ideas and include **quotations**; the **twigs** on the tree become your explanation and evidence.



Compare the ways an event is described in 'Blessing' with the ways an event is described in one other poem.

## GCSE English Paper One Section B: practice questions

### Writing to inform, explain or describe



Answer **one** question from this section.

You are advised to spend about **45 minutes** on this section.

**Remember:**

- spend 5 minutes planning and sequencing your material
- aim to write about two sides of A4 in average sized handwriting
- spend 5 minutes checking your paragraphing, punctuation and spelling.

1. Write an **article** for a school or college website in which you **inform** other **students** about a recent school or college event.
2. Choose a time when you have been very happy or very unhappy. **Explain** why you felt that way.
3. You are asked to recommend a holiday place to a friend. **Describe** the place in as much detail as you can.
4. Write a letter to a teachers' magazine in which you **inform** teachers about what life is really like for people of your age.
5. Given a choice, who or what would you most like to be? **Explain** the reasons for your choice.
6. **Describe** a sinister street at night.
7. Choose something you feel strongly about. Write **informatively** about it and **explain** why you feel as you do.
8. **Describe** a particular place or scene by day and by night.
9. **Describe** a particular place or scene at two different times of the year.
10. You work for the BBC and have received a letter of complaint from an elderly woman about the immorality and bad language used in a new drama series that the channel is screening. Write a suitably calming response **explaining** the situation and any possible action you will take.
11. You have been asked to design a piece for a local tourist guide that **describes** a local tourist attraction.
12. **Describe** an event in your life that you consider to have had an important impact - one that has made you the person that you are.
13. Write a speech to be given in a year 9 assembly on the subject of bullying. Your talk should **inform** and include practical advice on how to deal with the issue and who to turn to for help.

English Paper Two: linking poems from different cultures



Look at the poems you have studied from the *Different Cultures and Traditions* section of your anthology.

Now look at the grid below. In the first column is a list of possible ways of grouping the poems you have studied. In the second column you should list the titles of the poems that you think could be compared under that heading.

Grouping	Poems to include
<b>Subject matter and theme</b>	
Identity	
Change	
People	
Politics	
<b>Presentation</b>	
First person	
Description	
Metaphor	
Unusual presentation / use of non-standard English	
<b>Culture and tradition</b>	
Traditions	
Two cultures	
Particular places	
<b>Other groupings</b>	
Beginnings / endings	
Use of tone	
Layout	
Use of images	
Contrasting use of language	

## GCSE Paper Two: Poetry from Different Cultures and Traditions

### Past paper questions

This section relates to Section 1 of the AQA A Anthology (2004 onwards) that you have been using during the course.

You should spend **45 minutes** on each question. You should:

- spend 5 minutes planning your response
- check your work carefully
- use paragraphs
- ensure that you use quotations from the poems to support your ideas
- write about two sides of A4 in average sized handwriting.

- Compare how the poems ‘What Were They Like?’ and ‘Vultures’ explore conflict.
- Compare how the poems ‘What Were They Like?’ and ‘Vultures’ present the cruelty of war.
- Compare the ways that language is used in ‘Blessing’ and ‘Vultures’ to create vivid images and moods.
- Compare the ways that language is used in ‘Limbo’ and ‘Night of the Scorpion’ to describe important experiences.
- Compare the ways that ‘Nothing’s Changed’ and ‘Night of the Scorpion’ tell the reader a story.
- How is contrast used in ‘Two Scavengers in a Truck, Two Beautiful People in a Mercedes’? Compare this with the use of contrast in **one** other poem.
- Compare how identity is shown to be important in ‘Half-Caste’ and **one** other poem.
- Compare the ways language and layout are used to achieve particular effects in ‘Two Scavengers in a Truck, Two Beautiful People in a Mercedes’ and **one** other poem of your choice.

Compare:

- the kinds of language and layout used
- the effects achieved by these uses of language and layout
- your own responses to the poems.

- Compare the ways in which the poets show how important personal identity is in ‘Half-Caste’ and **one** other poem from the Poems from Different Cultures.

Compare:

- the feelings about identity in the poems
- how the poets show the importance of being who you are
- how the poets use language to show ideas and feelings about who you are and how important that is.

Different cultures 

	Subject	Unusual language	Structure	Tone	Imagery	Themes
'Limbo'						
'Nothing's Changed'						
'Island Man'						
'Blessing'						

	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Unusual language</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Tone</b>	<b>Imagery</b>	<b>Themes</b>
<b>'Two Scavengers in a Truck'</b>						
<b>'Night of the Scorpion'</b>						
<b>'Vultures'</b>						
<b>'What Were They Like?'</b>						

	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Unusual language</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Tone</b>	<b>Imagery</b>	<b>Themes</b>
<b>'Search For My Tongue'</b>						
<b>'Unrelated Incidents'</b>						
<b>'Half-Caste'</b>						
<b>'Love After Love'</b>						

	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Unusual language</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Tone</b>	<b>Imagery</b>	<b>Themes</b>
<b>'This Room'</b>						
<b>'Not My Business'</b>						
<b>'Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan'</b>						
<b>'Hurricane Hits England'</b>						

# Ambiguity

Often individual words, phrases or even whole sentences found in a text may have more than one possible meaning. This is called **ambiguity** and the language that is used is said to be **ambiguous**.

Sometimes ambiguity is **accidental** and can detract from the quality of a text. For example when writing a set of instructions, or providing information, a text needs to display a high level of clarity, i.e. it needs to be accurate and clear for the reader. Alternatively, accidental ambiguity may just make the text funny.

## Task 1

Look at the following headlines, adverts and notices; all have been published. What possible interpretations could each have? What makes them ambiguous?

- ENRAGED COW INJURES FARMER WITH AXE
- STOLEN PAINTING FOUND BY TREE
- JUDGE TO RULE ON NUDE BEACH
- MAN STRUCK BY LIGHTNING FACES BATTERY CHARGE
- SCHOOL DROP OUTS CUT IN HALF
- DOG FOR SALE: EATS ANYTHING, FOND OF CHILDREN (small ad.)
- DON'T LET WORRY KILL YOU: LET THE CHURCH HELP (church notice)
- LADIES ARE REQUESTED NOT TO HAVE CHILDREN AT THE BAR (sign in a Norwegian hotel)
- TIRED OF CLEANING YOURSELF? LET ME DO IT (small ad)
- A FIFTEEN YEAR OLD CROYDON BOY HAS BEEN SUSPENDED BY HIS HEAD SINCE LAST SEPTEMBER BECAUSE OF HIS LONG HAIR.

Sometimes ambiguity is **intentional** and used by the writer to create a particular effect, to show a range of meanings in a text and to make the reader think carefully. This is often the case in literature, especially in poetry where double meanings are used regularly and with subtlety.

## Task 2

Look at the following quotations taken from four poems in your Anthology. What makes these quotes ambiguous in light of subject and the themes of the poems from which they come? In what different ways can they be interpreted?

'I... leant across and let him out' <i>Hitcher</i>	'I gave commands; then all smiles stopped together' <i>My Last Duchess</i>
'...woke up with a head on the pillow...' <i>Salome</i>	'...I reach towards a hatch that opens on an endless sky' <i>Mother any distance...</i>

Find two other short quotations from the poems that you have studied that you think are ambiguous.

## Connotations 1

black | white | blue | red | green

- Look at the colours named above.
- For each colour, make a list of all the things it makes you think of. These may be emotions, things, places or ideas.

These are the connotations that each colour has i.e. the ideas that we associate with that colour. If you choose your language carefully, you can influence your readers' interpretations. This is because words have different **connotations**.

Poetry uses the power of connotation to great effect, conveying strong images through the use of a limited number of carefully chosen words.

**Now look at the following phrases taken from poems in your Anthology. What do these phrases make you think of?**

- '...their light hearts turned to stone'
- '...drizzle of one despondent dawn'
- 'I watched the flame feeding on my mother'
- '...looking down like some/ gargoyles Quasimodo'
- '...naked children screaming in the liquid sun'
- '...his small emerald island'

## Expanding description

In your exams you may be asked to describe a place, an event, an idea or an attitude. A simple way of making sure that your **description** is as effective as possible is to ensure that you make your **nouns** (the people, places or things in your writing) as interesting as possible. To do this you need to expand your **noun phrases** and use **adjectives**.

**Look at the following examples:**

- road
- busy road
- alarmingly busy road
- the alarmingly busy road
- the alarmingly busy road near the children's play area

### Task 1

Use the following nouns to create your own little bits of description like the example shown above: **cat / penguin / dream / cake**

### Task 2

Look at the following GCSE question. This has appeared on a past paper:

Describe the same place at night and during the day.

- Plan your response to this question
- Write out ten fully descriptive noun phrases that you could include in this response.

## Persuasive writing 1

The following is a list of popular persuasive (rhetorical) techniques:

- using metaphor (describing one thing in terms of another)
- using alliteration (repeated initial sounds)
- exaggeration
- appealing to an audience's emotions
- repetition
- using extreme emotions
- using a series of words building up to a climax, often in triples
- balanced phrases and sentences
- juxtaposing opposites
- numbering.

### Task:

Look at the examples below. These are taken from two very famous and effective persuasive speeches. Can you spot any of the persuasive techniques outlined above in these speeches? If you can underline and label the techniques you have found.

‘...I say to you today, my friends that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American Dream...I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character...I have a dream today...This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand together...’

**(Martin Luther King, 1963)**

‘...we shall not flag or fail...we shall fight in France, we shall fight in the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds...we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender...’

**(Winston Churchill, 1940)**

## Persuasive writing 2

---

**The careful use of questions is a very popular persuasive technique. They can be used in the following ways:**

- questioning when you don't expect an answer (rhetorical question)
- repeated questions
- questioning and answering yourself.

### **Task:**

---

Look at the example below, taken from a popular, fictional speech. You might have read the book! Identify, underline and label as many persuasive techniques in this piece as you can, paying particular attention to its use of questions.

‘Now, comrades, what is the nature of this life of ours? Let us face it: our lives are miserable, laborious, and short. We are born, we are given just so much food as will keep the breath in our bodies, and those of us who are capable of it are forced to work to the last atom of our strength; and the very instant that our usefulness has come to an end we are slaughtered with hideous cruelty. No animal in England knows the meaning of happiness or leisure after he is a year old. No animal in England is free. The life of an animal is misery and slavery: that is the plain truth...But is this simply part of the order of nature? Is it because this land of ours is so poor that it cannot afford a decent life to those who dwell upon it? No, comrades, a thousand times no!...’

**(From *Animal Farm* by George Orwell)**

## Writing a persuasive speech

### An argument (for or against) often involves:

- a series of points backed up with facts
- an invitation to the audience to agree with you
- factual language
- objective style suggesting 'we all agree'.

### How to begin your argument:

- note down the important points you want to include
- begin by asking the audience some thought-provoking questions so that they start to reconsider their views and/or behaviour
- use emotive language to help sway the audience and get them to adopt your point of view
- shock them
- appeal to their sympathy
- appeal to their common sense
- reinforce your points by listing them.

**Once you have your audience's attention you should use persuasive techniques carefully and effectively.**

### Some words of warning

- Be careful not to resort to prejudice or rely on comments such as 'everyone' or 'it's obvious'.
- The ending of the speech is as important as the beginning. Leave your audience under no doubt about the main points you are making.

### Task

Choose one of the topics below.

- Plan your response.
- Write the opening paragraph, ensuring that you grab the attention of the audience.
- Analyse your opening. What techniques have you used? How effective do you think it is? What could make your opening better?
- Write a speech for a year nine assembly that persuades them not to smoke.
- Write a speech to be delivered to your English teacher persuading him or her not to give you any homework.
- Write a speech aimed at your parents to persuade them to give you much more pocket money.

## The McDonald's approach to essay writing

Here is one way to remember how to structure an essay, in any situation!

Imagine a burger... then think about an essay...

The **top half of your burger bun** represents your **introduction**. Without it, you wouldn't know what to expect and your entire meal would be a bit of a mess. Here you tell the reader what you will be discussing and highlight the major points you are going to make.

The burger itself: the '**meat**' of your essay, the **ideas** that give substance to your arguments and perspectives. What you think should be organised neatly and logically into paragraphs.

The **sauce**: this is the bit that adds the extra flavour; the **quotations and examples** you use to support your ideas.

The **salad**: it may be boring but without it your burger just doesn't have the same taste or appearance. This is the **explanation** of your ideas.

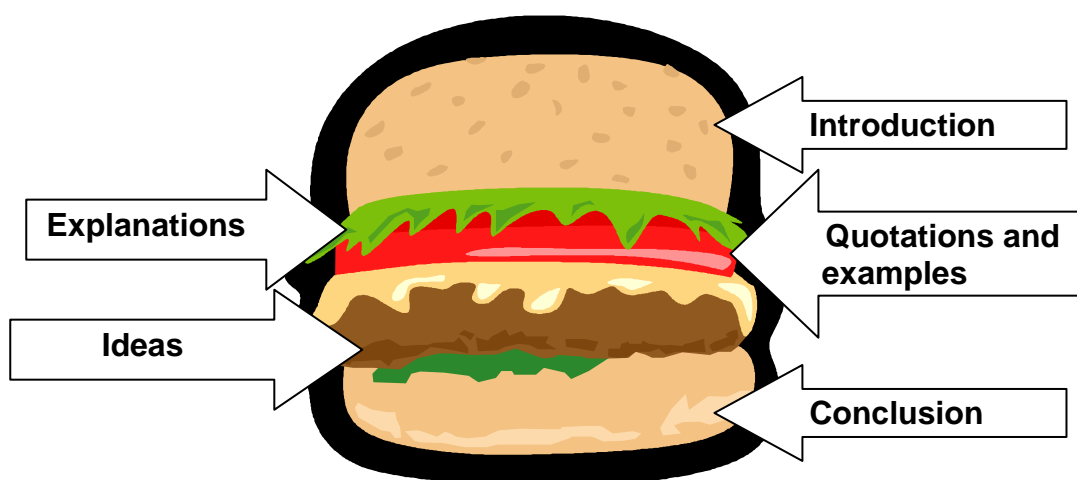
The **bottom burger bun**: this is your **conclusion**, linked to the aims of your introduction. It sums up your main ideas and keeps your fingers from getting very messy!

If you really want to impress think about adding a few **sesame seeds** to the top. In a pile of essays, how are you going to make yours stand out? Add a bit of interest by writing a killer first line that **grabs the attention** of your reader.

Task:

Plan the essay below. You should include the key quotations that you will use to support your ideas.

Compare how the poems 'What Were They Like' and 'Vultures' explore the idea of conflict.



## Analysing non-literary texts

Choose **three** different non-literary texts e.g. a leaflet, a newspaper article, an advertisement.

Now complete the table below. Include as much detail as you can, using quotations and specific examples where appropriate.

	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3
Audience			
Purpose			
Content			
Language			
Structure			

## Twisting genres

A genre is a type or style of drama, prose, media or poetry. Once you have identified a piece of writing as belonging to a particular genre, you start to expect certain things from it; these are its generic features.

Look at the following popular fictional genres. What do you expect from these genres? Use the table below to record your ideas.

Genre	Setting	Characters	Plot	Themes / Atmosphere
Horror				
Detective				
Romance				

Look at the following list of non-fiction text types (genres). Can you think of any other examples?

news report (spoken)	news report (written)
advertisement	diary
reference book	real-life magazine story
guide book	recipe
instruction manual	business letter

**Task:** Pick a well known fairy tale e.g. *The Three Little Pigs*, *Goldilocks*, *Rumpelstiltskin*, *Little Red Riding Hood* or *Cinderella*.

Write a short extract (approximately 3 or 4 sentences) related to your chosen fairytale, in the style of one of the above non-fiction genres. Repeat this task three times, selecting a different genre each time

Fairytale / genre: .....

Extract:.....

.....  
 .....

Fairytale / genre: .....

Extract:.....

.....  
 .....

Fairytale / genre: .....

Extract:.....

.....  
 .....

Fairytale / genre: .....

Extract:.....

.....  
 .....

# Onomatopoeia

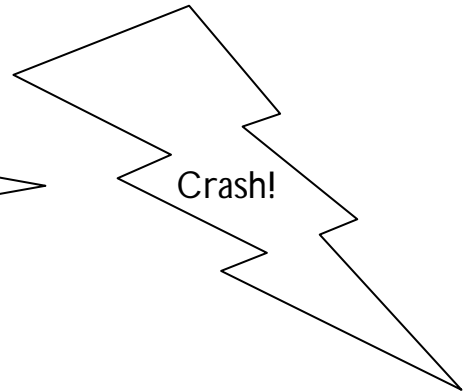
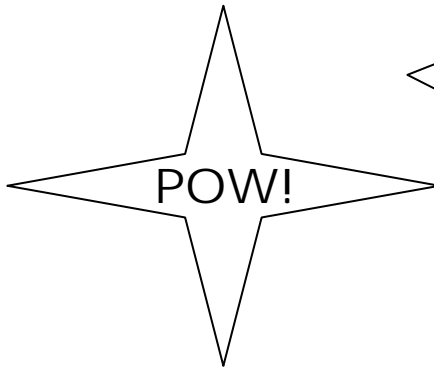
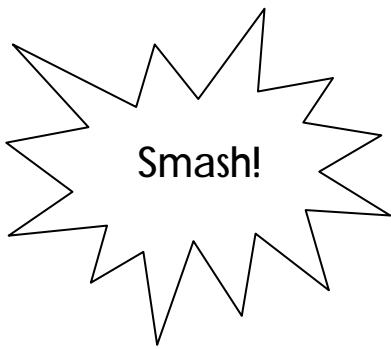
## Definition:

Onomatopoeia is when the sound of a word imitates its meaning. It can be used to good effect in many types of writing from poetry to persuasive speeches to descriptive pieces of writing.

## Task 1

---

Look at the sound bubbles below. These are comic strip style. What do you think is happening to the characters in the comic?



Smash!.....

.....

.....

.....

POW!.....

.....

.....

.....

Crash! .....

.....

.....

.....

**Task 2**

---

Complete the table below with five onomatopoeic words to describe each situation. Then go on to make a list of the onomatopoeic words you can find in the poetry you have studied in your Anthology.

The sound of children playing in a swimming pool.	Opening a can of fizzy drink.	The school canteen when the bell goes for lunch.	Walking in deep snow/ leaves.
	fizz		crunch

**Task 3**

---

Fill in the gaps with your choice of onomatopoeic words.

I returned to a vacant house. I had to force the door as the stack of mail that had slowly gathered behind it ..... across the floor. The rancid stench of emptiness hung in the air. The eerie silence was only ruptured by the sharp ..... of the old grandfather clock that stood ominously in the dark hallway.

I turned to pick up the milk that had been souring on the doorstep. The bottles ..... together. It was then that I noticed the letter. My name was written neatly in black ink on the crisp white envelope. The paper ..... in my hands as I started to tremble.

## Domino cards: poems from different cultures

Cut along the dotted lines to create your dominoes. Now link the poems by matching the quotation to the title.

<p>'And the limbo stick is the silence in front of me'</p>	<p><b>Blessing</b></p>	<p>'Imagine the drip of it, / the small splash, echo / in a tin mug, / the voice of a kindly god'</p>	<p><b>Nothing's Changed</b></p>
<p>'No sign says it is: / but we know where we belong'</p>	<p><b>What Were They Like</b></p>	<p>'It was reported that their singing resembled / the flights of moths in moonlight. / Who can say? It is silent now.'</p>	<p><b>Island Man</b></p>
<p>'muffling muffling / his crumpled pillow waves / island man heaves himself / Another London day'</p>	<p><b>Two Scavengers In A Truck, Two Beautiful People in a Mercedes</b></p>	<p>'And the very red light for an instant / holding all four close together / as if anything at all were possible / between them, across that small gulf / in the high seas / of this democracy'</p>	<p><b>Vultures</b></p>
<p>'for in the very germ / of that kindred love is / lodged the perpetuity / of evil'</p>	<p><b>Night of the Scorpion</b></p>	<p>'May the sum of evil / balanced in this unreal world / against the sum of good / become diminished by your pain'</p>	<p><b>Limbo</b></p>