

# Boost Free Lessons - Year 10 English

## Lesson 13: Reading Poetry: Language and Meaning

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Read the poem below carefully. The line numbers will help you refer to specific parts of the poem in your answers.

### Inventory

- 1 Two hundred and forty tins of tomatoes,
- 2 which is what happens when a man
- 3 who lived through one shortage
- 4 is given a second one to worry about.
- 5
- 6 We found them after, in the shed,
- 7 stacked in the dark by size and date
- 8 the way he stacked everything,
- 9 and my sister laughed and then did not.
- 10
- 11 There is a word for this in the pamphlets.
- 12 They call it stockpiling and they mean
- 13 something faintly ridiculous, a man
- 14 with a trolley, on the news, in a mask.
- 15
- 16 They do not mean a boy of nine
- 17 watching his mother divide one tin
- 18 four ways and take the smallest,
- 19 and deciding, without saying so,
- 20 that this would not happen twice.
- 21
- 22 We gave them to the food bank.
- 23 It took two trips. On the second
- 24 my sister said: he'd have hated this,
- 25 and I said: no. This is the only thing
- 26 he ever wanted them for.



### Worked Example 1

**Explain the effect of the shift in stanza four.**

1. Track what the poem does in each stanza before analysing any one of them.
2. Stanzas one to three present the tins as absurd, ending on the ridiculous media image.
3. Stanza four reframes them entirely by supplying the memory that explains the behaviour.
4. The shift makes the reader complicit: they have been laughing along with the sister and the pamphlets until the poem shows them what they were laughing at.

**Model:** The first three stanzas present the tins through the language of the pamphlets, as “something faintly ridiculous”. Stanza four supplies the childhood memory behind them, which reframes the hoard as a response to real hunger and implicates the reader in the earlier dismissal.

**Remember:** In poetry, track the **shift**: where the poem changes what the reader thinks. Ask what the poem lets you assume before it corrects you.



**Question 1:** Answer the following questions. Give the line numbers you used in your answers.

1. How many tins of tomatoes were found?

---

---

2. Where were the tins found?

---

---

3. How were they stacked?

---

---

4. What word do the pamphlets use?

---

---

5. How old was the boy in the memory?

---

---

6. Where were the tins taken?

---

---



**Question 2:** Answer the following questions in full sentences.

1. Explain the effect of the line about the sister laughing and then not.

---

---

---

2. What does the poet suggest about the language used in the pamphlets?

---

---

---

---

3. Explain the significance of the mother taking the smallest portion.

---

---

---

4. Explain how the final three lines change the meaning of the poem.

---

---

---

---

5. What is the poem about, beyond a hoard of tinned food?

---

---

---

---





Every student has gaps. The hard part is knowing exactly where they are.  
That is what a Boost assessment is for.

## Book a Free Assessment

Normally valued at \$199, free for new families

- A friendly skills check aligned to the NSW syllabus
- Face to face with our qualified tutors
- A clear picture of your child's strengths and gaps
- A weekly plan built around what they actually need

**Book a Free Assessment →**

**[boosttutoring.com.au/contact](https://boosttutoring.com.au/contact)**



**Answers and Model Responses:** Reading Poetry: Language and Meaning**Question 1**

1. Two hundred and forty.
2. In the shed, after his death.
3. In the dark, by size and date.
4. Stockpiling.
5. Nine.
6. To the food bank.

**Question 2**

1. Model: The line enacts a realisation in real time. The laugh is the expected response to an absurd quantity; stopping mid-reaction is the moment she understands what the stacking means. The poet gives no explanation, which forces the reader to make the same shift she does.
2. Model: The pamphlets reduce a behaviour to a label. *Stockpiling* describes what was done while erasing every reason for doing it, and the image it summons is a figure of fun on the news. The poet is arguing that official language can be accurate and still be a failure of understanding, because it explains nothing about the person it describes.
3. Model: It is the detail that explains everything else in the poem. The boy learns scarcity not as inconvenience but as watching his mother go without, and the tins are his answer to that. It also shows the behaviour was learned from love rather than fear.
4. Model: Until then the tins are a symptom of damage, and the sister's line invites the reader to see the donation as a betrayal. The speaker's reply reverses this: a man who hoarded so that nobody would go without has finally had his hoard used for exactly that. The poem ends by recovering his dignity, and by suggesting the family understood him only after he was gone.
5. Model: It is about how trauma is transmitted and how easily it is misread. The father's behaviour looks irrational until the poem supplies its cause, and the poet uses the reader's own dismissal to demonstrate the point. It is also about language: the pamphlet word and the lived reason describe the same act, and only one of them contains a person.

