

Boost Free Lessons - Year 7 English

Lesson 17: Reading Poetry

Name: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____

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

Low Tide

- 1 My grandfather walks the flats at six,
- 2 trousers rolled, bucket swinging empty,
- 3 reading the sand the way other people
- 4 read a newspaper: quickly, and for years.
- 5
- 6 He knows which dimple means a pipi,
- 7 which means nothing but a trapped bubble
- 8 going nowhere. He has never once explained
- 9 the difference. I have never once asked.
- 10
- 11 The water has gone out so far this morning
- 12 that the bay looks embarrassed, caught
- 13 half dressed, all its ribs showing.
- 14
- 15 He stops. He bends. The bucket answers
- 16 with a small wet knock, and then another,
- 17 and I understand that this is the whole
- 18 conversation, and that it is enough.
- 19
- 20 Behind us the tide is already turning,
- 21 patient as a debt, coming to take it back.



Worked Example 1

Explain the effect of the simile in lines 3 to 4.

1. Name the technique and quote it briefly: reading the sand *the way other people read a newspaper*.
2. Say what is being compared. Reading sand is compared with reading a newspaper.
3. Explain what the comparison suggests. A newspaper is read easily, daily, and without effort.
4. Then push further, because the best answers explain **why** the comparison was chosen. It makes his skill seem ordinary to him and extraordinary to the speaker.

Model: The simile compares reading the sand with reading “a newspaper” (line 4), something done quickly and habitually. It suggests the grandfather's expertise is so practised that it has become routine to him, which makes it all the more impressive to the watching speaker.

Remember: For poetry, look at **imagery**, **line breaks** and **sound** as well as meaning. Always ask why the poet chose a particular comparison, not just what it means.



Question 1: Answer the following questions. Refer to line numbers where you can.

1. What time does the grandfather walk the flats? (line 1)

2. What is he carrying? (line 2)

3. What does a dimple in the sand sometimes mean? (line 6)

4. What is the bay compared to in lines 12 to 13?

5. What sound does the bucket make? (lines 15 to 16)

6. What is happening behind them in the final two lines?



Question 2: Answer the following questions in full sentences.

1. Explain the effect of the personification in lines 12 to 13.

2. What do lines 8 to 9 suggest about the relationship between the two characters?

3. Explain what the speaker means by *this is the whole conversation* (lines 17 to 18).

4. Explain the simile *patient as a debt* (line 21). Why is a debt a surprising comparison?

5. What is the poem really about, beyond a walk on the sand? Use evidence in your answer.





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

1. Six o'clock.
2. A bucket, which is empty.
3. A pipi.
4. A person who is embarrassed and caught half dressed.
5. A small wet knock.
6. The tide is turning and coming back in.

Question 2

1. Model: The bay is given human feelings, described as *embarrassed* and *caught half dressed*. This makes the exposed sand feel exposed in a human way, and adds gentle humour while suggesting something private has been revealed.
2. Model: Neither has explained or asked, which suggests an easy, wordless understanding built over years. It shows closeness that does not depend on talking.
3. Model: The knock of shellfish into the bucket takes the place of speech. The speaker realises that shared activity, rather than words, is how the two of them communicate, and that nothing more is needed.
4. Model: A debt is patient because it waits, but it always returns to be collected. Comparing the tide to a debt is surprising because it makes something natural feel like an obligation, and hints that the time with the grandfather is borrowed and will be reclaimed.
5. Model: The poem is about inherited knowledge and the passing of time. The grandfather's unexplained skill (lines 8 to 9) and the tide that comes *to take it back* (line 21) suggest the speaker is aware that this knowledge, and the man himself, will not always be there. The quietness of the poem mirrors a relationship that is close but rarely spoken.

