

Topic: Poetry in context

Evaluating the impact of poetry

Today you will:

- ▶ understand that poetic texts vary according to purpose
- ▶ understand that poetry conveys social, moral and ethical positions that vary in impact.

Resources

Find and prepare

Sheet 1 — English glossary
Year 10

Sheet 3 — Whispers, songs
and shrieks

Sheet 4 — Analysing poetry

Key terms

assumptions, beliefs, disempowerment, empowerment,
poetic form, representation, stylistic features, subject
matter, theme, values

For definitions and explanations of terms, please see the
[Glossary](#).

Keep the **Glossary** for reference throughout this unit.

Lesson

Understand unit intent



In this unit, you will be writing original poetry and demonstrating your ability to analyse, evaluate and appreciate poetry. This process will prepare you for an oral presentation where you will perform an original poem and provide an analytical discussion of the poem. You will record or present your performance of the poem and rationale at the end of the unit.

Your poem will be about a topic inspired by your own social awareness, written for a particular audience to evoke a particular emotion and influence their thoughts and/or actions.

My poem is about global warming. I want an audience of young adults to be shocked when they hear the effect this is having on the oceans' beautiful creatures.



When examining poetry it is important to understand some of the specific terms that explain the features of poetry.

Throughout the unit, you can refer to **Sheet 1** — [English glossary Year 10](#) to become familiar with the terms related to this unit. After the lesson, keep this sheet in a safe place to be used during future lessons.

Examine social and cultural purposes of poetic texts



Well met, good fellows! William Shakespeare is my name. I am considered a bit of an expert on poetry, so I have been brought in to help. This lesson is about understanding that poets, like all authors, write for a specific purpose — to influence readers and listeners in particular ways. Before we begin, let us see what you already know about poetry.

1. Show your understanding of what poetry is and what its purpose is by briefly responding to these focus questions.
 - a. How do you know poetry is poetry? How is poetry different from prose? (3–4 sentences)
 - b. What makes an author choose to write in a poetic form, rather than prose? (1–2 sentences)
 - c. What subject matter do you think is available for poetry? What is the subject matter of some poems you are familiar with? (3–4 sentences)
 - d. Where have you encountered or do you encounter poetry in your life?

Poetry, like other forms of writing, is influenced by purpose and by the context in which it is written. The following table has a list of social and cultural contexts in which poetry often appears. You are to write more examples of how poetry may be used in the suggested contexts.

2. Read the left-hand column of the following table that includes some of the contexts where poetry is often used.
- Give one example of how poetry might be used in each context.
 - Give one purpose or effect of using poetry in that context — what the poem is designed to do, or the effect it is supposed to have.

Social and cultural contexts	Examples of how poetry may be used in these contexts	Purpose/social and cultural effects
Example: <i>Valentine's Day</i>	<i>Valentine's Day card</i>	<i>message of love or romance</i>
Birthday		
Radio		
Anzac Day		
Sporting events		
Diary		
Funeral		
Television		
Other cultural events?		

Throughout these lessons, you will demonstrate your ability to analyse, evaluate and appreciate poetry and also write your own original poetry.



You are going to write your first poem with a particular context provided for you. I find starting to write is the hard part of being an author. Sometimes it is easier to be told where to start. In my day, the Queen was pretty good at that. Elizabeth the First was a tad bossy!

You will need the following key terms for this unit.

- **assumptions:** rarely questioned opinions that are taken to be absolutely correct. For example, the existence of gods or deities or scientific reports are reliable
- **beliefs:** ideas that are taken to be 'true' by individuals, regardless of supporting evidence. For example, belief in religious freedom or scientific theories
- **theme:** in poetry 'theme' refers to the dominant social, moral or ethical messages a poet communicates about the subject matter of a poem. For example: The theme of a poem whose subject matter is teenagers, may actually be 'respect'. Respect is a broader concept than the subject matter 'teenagers'. The poem might talk about respect in a number of different ways, for example: respect for self, respect for parents.
- **values:** ideas or attitudes that the people of a social or cultural group believe to be positive and worthy. For example, respecting an individual's right to religion or test theories through science

Examine these two poetry writing tasks and stimulus images.



3. Select one of these tasks and write a short poem to show your understanding of social and cultural purpose. (6–8 lines) (**Hint:** Consider how you will represent your values, beliefs and assumptions about particular social or cultural groups and behaviours and how you will reflect a social, moral or ethical message or theme in your poem.)

4. Complete the table to analyse the social and cultural purpose of your poem.

- Identify the poem type, for example: sporting chorus or jingle for television.
- Identify the intended audience, purpose, subject matter and theme or message.

Poem type	Audience	Purpose	Subject matter	Theme or message

An understanding of the intended audience, purpose, subject matter and theme of a poem are essential when analysing poetry. A consideration of these factors aids comprehension of who may be empowered or disempowered by particular poems, which can, in turn, help evaluate the social and cultural effects of a poem.

empowerment: the process of supplying power in ways that may legitimise, recognise or value the identities and behaviours of individuals and groups

disempowerment: the process of depriving 'power' in ways that delegitimise, ignore, devalue or discriminate against the identities and behaviours of individuals and groups

5. Reflect on the social and cultural purpose of your poem.
 - a. Who or what is empowered (aided, encouraged or glorified) by your poem?
(1–2 sentences)
 - b. Who may be disempowered (hindered, discouraged or denigrated) by your poem?
(1–2 sentences)
 - c. What are the real-world effects of these representations? What behaviours could the representations evident in the poem lead to? (1–2 sentences)



The poem you just wrote has a clear social and cultural context. Most people would recognise the place of marketing rhymes or jingles and sporting chants in our communities.

Poetry of a more literary nature can still have a strong social or cultural context, but may require deeper analysis to appreciate these aspects. It is good to know where and when a writer lived and what ideas influenced his work.

Some of the deeper purposes for more literary poetry are:

- self-expression
- to alert the public about important issues or concerns
- to show appreciation of people, places and things
- to commemorate people, places or events.

You'll now look at the poem, 'Whispers, songs and shrieks', which has a strong sense of purpose. While you are reading the poem, consider the possible social and cultural effects. Also think about which groups and behaviours are represented, or may be empowered or disempowered by the poem.

6. Open **Sheet 3** — [Whispers, songs and shrieks](#) and read the poem.

7. Open **Sheet 4** — [Analysing poetry](#).

Complete the activity on **Sheet 4** to analyse the poem, 'Whispers, songs and shrieks'. In the 'evidence' row, provide quotations from the poem that supports your answers.