Attitudes, Beliefs and Practices in Poetry Education at a Post-secondary School in Malta

Volume 1 of 2

Daniel Xerri

B.A. (Hons), P.G.C.E., M.A., M.Ed.

Ph.D.

University of York

Education

December 2015

Abstract

This study is an investigation into the relationship between attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry and the study of poetry. Its participants consisted of teachers and students at a post-secondary institution in Malta as well as the chief examiner responsible for the Matriculation Certificate Advanced level English syllabus and examination. The study's application of a mixed methods approach entailed the use of a number of research methods and instruments, including a questionnaire, classroom observation, and semi-structured and focus group interviews. These interviews employed the use of poetry as stimulus material. This research design was deployed as a means of developing an understanding of the participants' attitudes and beliefs in relation to poetry and its pedagogy, as well as a way of examining their practices in the poetry classroom and their approach to poetry outside the school environment. This study shows that the interplay between attitudes, beliefs and practices is fundamental. Given that such research is to a large extent missing from the literature on poetry education, this study's main contribution to advancing knowledge in the field is the light it throws on the importance of the relationship between attitudes and beliefs on the one hand and practices on the other. Rather than restricting itself to exploring the influence of examinations on poetry pedagogy, as is the case with much previous research, this study clarifies the importance of shared attitudes and beliefs in determining the way teachers and students approach poetry. It demonstrates how fundamental it is for them and other stakeholders to develop an awareness of the effect of attitudes and beliefs in relation to poetry and poetry pedagogy. Its findings lead to a better understanding of the complexity of the events that occur in the poetry classroom and beyond, events that are engaged in by teachers and students both consciously and not.

Table of Contents

Volume 2

List of Tables

List of Figures

Acknowledgements

Author's Declaration

This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References. This thesis consists of original work produced in the course of my doctoral studies at the Department of Education, University of York. Since the publication of my first academic article in 2011, substantial parts of this thesis have been published (or are being published) as articles or book chapters. This has been done with the approval of the University of York. The publications that feature work produced as part of my thesis are listed below:

Xerri, D. (2011). Shared writing via contemporary poetry. *English in Education*, *45*(2), 175-188.

Xerri, D. (2012). Multicultural poetry in ELT: Benefits, challenges and strategies. In P. Díez, R. Place & O. Fernández Vicente (Eds.), *Plurilingualism: Promoting co-operation between communities, people and nations* (pp. 65-79). Bilbao: University of Deusto.

Xerri, D. (2012). Poetry on the subway: An interview with children's poet John Rice. *New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship*, *18*(2), 105-115.

Xerri, D. (2012). Poetry teaching and multimodality: Theory into practice. *Creative Education, 3*(4), 507-512.

Xerri, D. (2012). The multimodal approach to using poetry in ELT. In T. Pattison (Ed.), *IATEFL 2011: Brighton conference selections* (pp. 151-152). Canterbury: IATEFL.

Xerri, D. (2013). Colluding in the 'torture' of poetry: Shared beliefs and assessment. *English in Education*, *47*(2), 134-146.

Xerri, D. (2013). 'Dissecting butterflies': Literary theory and poetry teaching in post-16 education. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, *18*(4), 205-214.

Xerri, D. (2013). Poetry writing in the post-16 English curriculum. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, *12*(2), 140-155.

Xerri, D. (2013, Autumn). The value of creativity: Language teachers as creative practitioners. *Teaching English*, *3*, 23-25.

Xerri, D. (2014). Critical reading and student engagement with poetry. In S. Dymoke, M. Barrs, A. Lambirth & A. Wilson (Eds.), *Making poetry happen:*

Transforming the poetry classroom (pp. 29-35). London and New York: Bloomsbury.

Xerri, D. (2014). English teachers positioning themselves as poets. *ETAS Journal, 32*(1), 25-27.

Xerri, D. (2014). 'Poetry is a tremendous ally': Children's poet Michael Rosen on teachers' attitudes towards poetry. *New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship, 20*(2), 112-122.

Xerri, D. (2014). Schools as 'poetry-friendly places': Michael Rosen on poetry in the curriculum. *Arts Education Policy Review, 115*(4), 151-158.

Xerri, D. (2015). Countering the hegemonic English curriculum: Intercultural competence through poetry. In D. Broudy, J. Klaehn & J. Winter (Eds.), *News from somewhere: A reader in communication and challenges to globalization* (pp. 39-47). Eugene, OR: Wayzgoose Press.

Xerri, D. (2015). On owing one's poetic life to inspiring teachers of English. *The Use of English, 67*(1), 39-44.

Xerri, D. (in press). Poetry education research as an anchorage of thought: Using poetry as interview stimulus material. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*.

Xerri, D. (in press). Igniting young people's creativity: The Sydney Story Factory. *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*.

Xerri, D. (in press). 'Poems look like a mathematical equation': Assessment in poetry education. *International Journal of English Studies*.

Xerri, D. (in press). Teachers' beliefs and literature teaching: The case of poetry. In B. Schaff, C. Surkamp & J. Schlegel (Eds.), *The institution of literature: 250 years of English Studies and cultural transfer*. Göttingen: University of Göttingen.

Xerri, D., & Vella Briffa, P. (in press). Teacher-designed high stakes English language testing: Washback and impact. In Patrick Ng & Esther Boucher-Yip (Eds.), *Teacher agency and policy response in English Language Teaching*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Xerri, D., & Vella Briffa, P. (in press). Teacher involvement in high stakes testing. In C. Docherty & F. Barker (Eds.), *Language assessment for multilingualism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

My interest in researching poetry education was ignited by my poetry lessons at secondary school. Midway through my secondary education, my class was assigned a non-Maltese teacher for our English lessons. Due to her accent and the Bosnian War raging at the time we assumed she was an émigré from the Balkans. Unlike my previous English teachers, who mostly focused on telling us what poems meant, she encouraged us to learn how to recite poetry by heart and to pay attention to a poem's language and musicality. The contrast between her approach to poetry and that adopted by my other English teachers made me realise that the genre I had always associated with riddles and dense meanings was actually capable of being read and enjoyed in other ways. When I later followed a teacher education course at the University of Malta, one of my tutors strongly objected to the practice of asking students to recite poetry by heart. In her opinion this once common practice had no place in the twenty-first century classroom. I found this odd because my parents and relatives had always spoken fondly about being encouraged to memorise poetry when they were children. Thanks to my émigré teacher I could understand why they felt this way. For this reason I cannot help but agree with the poet Brad Leithauser (2013), who argues that verse memorisation 'provides us with knowledge of a qualitatively and physiologically different variety: you take the poem inside you, into your brain chemistry if not your blood, and you know it at a deeper, bodily level than if you simply read it off a screen'. Despite all the reasons my tutor listed in support of her objections, I felt glad that I had experienced different approaches to poetry in my secondary schooling. It made me committed to the idea of providing my own students with a variety of ways of experiencing a poem and of capitalising on approaches that maximised their engagement with poetry, including memorisation and recitation. My reading of the research literature in my graduate studies made me aware of how 'a phenomenon that for so many years had formed a regular component of mass experience was demoted to the status of an optional pursuit' (Robson, 2012, p. 9). Research also indicated that educators' opposition to the practice of memorising poetry was driven by the notion that 'it did not help students to analyse a poem and did not help them in exams' (Pullinger, 2012, p. 392). This association of poetry with the analytical exercise typical of examinations is especially telling in light of Opie and Opie's (1959/2001) seminal research on how verse as a form of

language play amongst children helps to perpetuate the oral tradition. Thanks to initiatives like Poetry in Voice (Canada), Poetry by Heart (England), Poetry Aloud (Ireland), and Poetry out Loud (USA), the memorization and recitation of poetry are gradually becoming popular again. The changing fortunes of this particular approach to poetry in the classroom has made me reflect on why teachers teach poetry in the way they do and how their attitudes and beliefs in relation to the genre might influence their practices.

This study is an investigation into the relationship between attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry and pedagogy. Its participants consisted of teachers and students at a post-secondary[1] institution in Malta as well as the chief examiner responsible for the Matriculation Certificate Advanced level English (henceforth MC English) examination. This study explores the attitudes and beliefs of the participants in relation to poetry and its pedagogy. It also examines their practices in the poetry classroom and their approach to poetry outside the school environment.

1.1 Attitudes, Beliefs and Practices

As shown by research (Peel & Hargreaves, 1995; Peel, Patterson, & Gerlach, 2000), beliefs about English have played an important role in the formation of the subject due to how they determine classroom practices. The relationship between attitudes and beliefs on the one hand and practices on the other is the main focus of this study. Hence, it is helpful to start by defining these constructs and identifying the possible links between them. An attitude is 'An enduring pattern of evaluative responses towards a person, object, or issue' (Colman, 2015, p. 62). It is 'A stable, long-lasting, learned predisposition to respond to certain things in a certain way' (Statt, 2003, p. 11). According to the American Psychological Association (APA, 2009), 'Attitudes provide summary evaluations of target objects and are often assumed to be derived from specific beliefs, emotions, and past behaviors associated with those objects' (p. 40). An attitude 'guides, biases or otherwise influences our behaviour' and typically consists of three components: 'the cognitive – what we believe about an object; the affective – our feelings toward an object; and the behavioural – how we might actually behave toward an object' (Cardwell, 2013, p. 19). The conative dimension of

---

[1] Compulsory education in Malta is up to the age of 16. For the purposes of this study, post-secondary refers to education followed between the ages of 16 to 18 at institutions that prepare students for the Matriculation Certificate examination. It is distinct from vocational education, which typically also starts at the age of 16 and prepares students for a specific trade or profession.

an attitude is sometimes included as part of its definition; this has to do with intentionality (Hayes & Stratton, 2003, p. 24). Cardwell (2013) explains that 'With less firmly entrenched attitudes we may rely more on the *affective* component, and summarize our attitude simply in terms of whether we like or dislike something' (p. 19). However, when an attitude is more deep-seated an individual relies on the cognitive and behavioural dimensions. This is where attitudes are related to beliefs and practices. Borg (2001) defines a belief as 'a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behaviour' (p. 186). A belief is 'acceptance of the truth, reality, or validity of something…particularly in the absence of substantiation' (APA, 2009, p. 54). Moreover, a belief is 'an association of some characteristic or attribute, usually evaluative in nature, with an attitude object' (APA, 2009, p. 54). Attitudes and beliefs help to shape practices. For example, a review commissioned by the Sutton Trust, an educational think tank in the UK, found that one of the six components of effective teaching consists of teacher beliefs due to some evidence of impact on student outcomes: 'Why teachers adopt particular practices, the purposes they aim to achieve, their theories about what learning is and how it happens and their conceptual models of the nature and role of teaching in the learning process all seem to be important' (Coe, Aloisi, Higgins, & Elliot Major, 2014, p. 3). Practice is defined as 'doing, performance, action' but it 'can also take the form of habitualized and institutionalized ways of doing something. This applies to all professional activities (e.g. teaching)' (Collins & O'Brien, 2011, pp. 362-363). When 'existing practices…have a good degree of widely agreed effectiveness' (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 51) they are deemed to be best practice. Research indicates that in many international contexts the interplay between attitudes, beliefs and practices seems quite significant (OECD, 2009). This study seeks to explore how teachers' and students' attitudes and beliefs are related to their practices within the context of poetry education.

While poetry education lacks substantial research in this area (see 3.1), teacher and student attitudes, beliefs and practices have been scrutinized by a wide range of studies in the field of language learning and teaching. Studies have examined these elements with respect to different areas of language learning and teaching and have focused on both learners and teachers. For example, research has

analysed these elements (and at times the relationship between them) in relation to natural talent (Mercer & Ryan, 2010), grammar pedagogy (Zhou, Busch, & Cumming, 2013), assessment (Büyükkarci, 2014), learning (Chatouphonexay & Intaraprasert, 2014), listening (Graham, Santos, & Francis-Brophy, 2014), spelling (McNeill & Kirk, 2014), and native and non-native English-speaking teachers (Chun, 2014). The significance of studying teachers' and learners' attitudes and beliefs is underscored by a number of studies that have shown how these affect practices (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Junqueira & Kim, 2013; Mellati, Fatemi, & Motallebzadeh 2013; Uysal & Bardakci, 2014) and influence achievement (Brantmeier, 2005; Donato, Tucker, Wudthayagorn, & Igarashi, 2000; Graham, 2004; Mills, Pajares, & Heron, 2006). Given that such research is to a large extent missing from the field of poetry education, the present study is necessary in order to shed light on teacher and student attitudes and beliefs in relation to poetry and how these affect their practices.

1.2 Context

Some information about the background of the study is presented in the next few sections to help explain the contextual features of the school at which the research was conducted. Since the main participants forming part of this study consisted of students following the MC English course at the University of Malta Junior College and members of its Department of English, it is indispensable to provide some background information on this institution. Details of the MC English course and examination are also provided.

This study was conducted in Malta, the largest island of an archipelago in the central part of the Mediterranean Sea. The country is situated 93 kilometres south of Sicily and 290 kilometres north of Libya. It gained independence from the British Empire in 1964 after having been a colony since 1800. It joined the European Union in 2004. The population amounts to around 425,000 (National Statistics Office, 2014) and the country is one of the most densely populated EU members. Maltese and English are the country's two official languages, with the latter being the second language for the majority of the population (Sciriha & Vassallo, 2006). Code switching between the two languages is a widespread phenomenon in education in Malta and is used both as a communicative resource and as part of one's identity (Camilleri, 1996). Education is compulsory up to the age of 16. In 2011-2012, 5,960

students were enrolled at the post-secondary level of education (National Statistics Office, 2014).[2]

1.2.1 The Matriculation Certificate

Students who choose to continue their education after secondary schooling may opt to follow a Matriculation Certificate course. The Matriculation Certificate is a student's passport to tertiary education. A substantial number of post-secondary students sit for Matriculation Certificate examinations. In 2013, 3,734 candidates registered for the May/June session of Matriculation Certificate examinations and 2,259 candidates for the September session (MATSEC, 2014). The September session is used both by candidates doing a re-sit to improve grades obtained in the May/June session as well as by new applicants. Students hoping to be awarded the Matriculation Certificate and thus continue their studies at university need to obtain a pass in two Advanced level subjects and in four Intermediate level subjects.[3] According to Grima, Camilleri, Chircop and Ventura (2005), 'The aim of the two Advanced levels is to induce students to deepen their knowledge of two subjects required for admission to a University course of their choice' (p. 14). The selective nature of Matriculation Certificate examinations is indicated by the fact that in 2013 a total of 1,690 candidates qualified for the Matriculation Certificate; this amounts to 27.1% of all 18-year-olds born in 1995 in Malta (MATSEC, 2014).

Matriculation Certificate examinations are designed and administered by the Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate (MATSEC) Examinations Board, which was established in 1991 by the University of Malta. Its affiliation with the university is meant to provide examinations with a form of accreditation. McNamara (2000) points out that 'test development involves a cycle of activity' and the circle starts turning due to the emergence of 'New situations…usually associated with social or political changes, which generate the need for a new test or assessment procedure' (p. 23). One such political change occurred in 1997 when Matriculation Certificate examinations were first held in Malta. Up to that year Maltese students sat for GCE Advanced level examinations offered by examination boards in the UK. Grima et al. (2005) explain the genesis of the Matriculation Certificate examinations:

---

[2] This figure does not take into account enrolments at vocational institutions, which amount to a further 6,217 students (National Statistics Office, 2014).
[3] Appendix 1 provides information on the grouping of subjects as part of the Matriculation Certificate and on the points assigned to each grade.

17

> Given the changes that were being implemented in both the British system and the local curriculum, educational policy makers decided that Malta should have its own assessment and certification system. The intent was to provide a local certification system that would be more consonant with Maltese educational objectives and the needs and aspirations of students and parents. (p. 1)

Despite the fact that MATSEC decided that Malta should have its own home-grown Advanced level examinations, the educational system remains closely modelled on the one in the UK. For example, just as in the UK, in Malta A-levels are usually studied over a two-year period at a sixth form college that in most cases is independent of secondary education institutions. For this reason, Chapter 2 makes frequent references to studies conducted in the UK.

1.2.2 The Matriculation Certificate English Examination

Various post-secondary institutions in Malta offer their students the opportunity of studying English at Advanced level and all these courses gravitate towards one examination. The MC English examination measures candidates' success in their two-year course of study and enables them to gain admission to university; therefore its nature is that of a selective test. MC English is one of the most popular Matriculation Certificate examinations. In 2013, 537 candidates registered for the May/June session, with around 47% obtaining grades A to C while a further 34% being awarded grades D and E (MATSEC, 2014). Grade F is awarded in the case of failure.

The MC English examination is a nine-hour examination made up of three papers and a 15-minute speaking examination. The latter was only introduced in May 2013, replacing a reading comprehension component (see Vella Briffa & Xerri, 2013 for further details). Paper 1 consists of Drama and Poetry and candidates are expected to answer a question on a play, a question on a collection of poems, and a question based on an unseen poem.[4] In Paper 2 candidates answer two questions based on different novels and a question based on an unseen prose passage. Paper 3 consists of a summary writing question, a selection of language essay titles, and linguistics questions/tasks. In the case of the language essay component and the linguistics component, candidates are expected to choose one title/task from each selection.

---

[4] In this component candidates write an essay about a poem they would not have studied at school.

Hence candidates are expected to write a total of seven to eight essays and a summary of a reading passage.[5]

Unlike some examination boards in the UK, MATSEC does not offer students the possibility of sitting for an examination that is made up solely of English literature components. The MC English syllabus combines literature, language and linguistics and in order to pass the exam candidates need to perform adequately well in all ten components. Despite the fact that the combined testing of language and literature in the MC English examination leads one to question its construct validity, there exist a number of arguments in the literature for the integration of the two subjects in one syllabus. Short and Candlin (1988) are of the opinion that the teaching of language and literature should go hand-in-hand and reinforce one another. Literature teaching can be used not just to develop students' literary competence but also to improve their linguistic proficiency. The fact that 'Many students enjoy reading literature' should act as 'a potentially useful aid to the language learner' (Short & Candlin, 1988, p. 181). Short and Candlin (1988) are aware that most non-native students of English 'are rarely equipped for the demands made upon them by the literary departments of universities' (p. 182) and hence they recommend the integration of language and literature. Nonetheless, students studying MC English are expected to have a very high, if not near-native, proficiency in the language.

Pike (2004) describes how when he acted as Head of English at a new school he was responsible for the integration of the study of the two subjects:

> In the belief that an integrated approach could work, that language skills can be developed while studying literature and also that it was indefensible for only the most able to be given that opportunity to study the texts set for English Literature, we embarked upon the new approach of dual entry. (p. 71)

Pike (2004) says that partly thanks to such an integrated approach students' results in English Language improved; this shows 'that an integrated approach can work well and that studying both subjects can be a positive and complementary experience for pupils' (p. 71). Butler's (2006) research on courses and tests that combine language and literature together leads him to conclude that 'The integrated approach was seen

---

[5] Appendix 2 consists of the Matriculation Certificate English examination syllabus and this provides further information on the exam's components, grading and content.

to be especially appropriate for students who used English as a second language since it did not take either literary or linguistic competence for granted but attempted to address and meet the actual needs of the students' (p. 283). Despite the fact that the MC English syllabus is biased in favour of literature, language is still considered of utmost importance since high proficiency in English is what enables students to manifest their mastery of the literature components.

1.2.3 Junior College

In Malta there are a total of seven post-secondary institutions, the largest of which in terms of student and teaching staff population is the University of Malta Junior College. This study focuses on the students enrolled on the MC English course at the Junior College and the staff forming part of its Department of English. Students attending the Junior College are typically aged between 16 and 18 and the institution's mission statement clearly emphasises the fact that it is geared towards preparing students for tertiary education. Established in 1995, the Junior College forms part of the University of Malta, the country's only university with roots going back to 1592. The Junior College's 'mission is to provide a holistic quality education to young men and women who seek to join the University by preparing them to develop the attributes needed for tertiary level studies' (Junior College, 2015, p. 4). The Junior College's existence provides the university with a level of control over the transitory phase between secondary and higher education.

At the end of a two-year Matriculation Certificate course, students at the Junior College are expected to sit for two examinations at Advanced level and four examinations at Intermediate level. The Department of English at the Junior College prepares students for two MATSEC examinations, one at Advanced level and one at Intermediate level. In order to take up English at Advanced level the only requirement expected of students is a minimum Grade 5 in their Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) English Language examination, which is typically held at the end of secondary education on a national level. Even though the MC English syllabus largely consists of English literature, students wishing to enrol for the MC English course at Junior College are not expected to hold a pass in the SEC English Literature examination. However, prospective students are warned that they should not embark on this course with any mistaken assumptions:

> This is an intensive two-year course leading to a searching nine-hour examination, a positive result in which is a prerequisite for entry to many University courses. The standards expected are very high, and students should preferably have a Grade 3 at the SEC examination in English Language and English Literature. They should also possess a solid background of reading, flair for the subject and a good grasp of the fundamentals of the language. Please note that English is not an 'easy option', contrary to what some people are led to believe. (Junior College, 2008, p. 9)

The MC English course is described as 'intensive…with a clear bias on literature' (Junior College, 2015, p. 16). Since students 'will be studying English with greater intensity [their] effort should reflect a proficiency that has improved from SEC level to pre-university standard' (Junior College, 2015, p. 16). This emphasis on an intensive study of English is mostly meant to discourage students who do not have the necessary aptitude for studying English literature. Similar warnings are not offered for other subjects.

The Department of English prides itself on the fact that it 'delivers over three hundred fifty hours of lectures, seminars, tutorials and personal contact time per week to about two thousand three hundred students' (Department of English, n.d.). The department's lecturers may express a preference for specific components before the start of the academic year; however, all lecturers are expected to teach a range of literature and language components. This means that despite the fact that certain lecturers end up being associated with a specific specialisation (e.g. poetry) they are still expected to teach other components.

The department affirms its faith in 'the academic and pedagogical strengths of the members of staff' (Department of English, n.d.) it is composed of:

> The different study programmes are managed by eighteen members of staff specialising in both Language and Literature and with varied teaching histories. The staff brings to the Department experiences of teaching English abroad; at Secondary and Tertiary level and in ESL, EFL and ESP contexts. The specific academic interests within the fields of Language and Literature of the staff are varied. In fact, there are members of staff who are working on their PhD in several areas related to English language and literature. We believe the academic and pedagogical strengths of the members of staff serve as a valid platform to the constant honing of the teaching/learning practices in the Department in an effort to offer our students a better learning environment. (Department of English, n.d.)

Due to their qualifications and experience, many lecturers are involved in a variety of national and international fora, such as syllabus and examination panels, teacher and academic associations, and policy-making entities.

Students following the MC English course at Junior College attend three lectures, two seminars and a tutorial every week. Each session lasts one hour. The set poetry text is taught by means of lectures during the first year of the course whereas students engage in the literary criticism of unseen poems during seminars throughout the entire two years. Lectures usually consist of groups of 30 to 40 students while seminars consist of not more than 18 students. In Carter and Long's (1991) opinion large classes affect teaching methodology because 'intensive, text-based study becomes more difficult and transmissive information-based survey courses represent an easier alternative' (p. 174). While claiming that economic factors make it highly unlikely that lectures will ever be abolished, Parini (2005) states that it is during the 'intimate settings' of seminars and tutorials that 'the best teaching experiences usually occur' because this is 'where minds rub against each other, and where students can test their knowledge of a discipline actively' (p. 126). Whether a distinction is made between the pedagogy employed in a lecture and the one used in seminars and tutorials was one of the results of this study.

MC English students are assigned a written task on a weekly basis and this is discussed during a tutorial that consists of around 6 to 8 students. Besides the department's official tutorial task, individual lecturers may assign other tasks to their classes. Students may also avail themselves of the opportunity of attending one-to-one consultation sessions with any of their lecturers. At the end of the first year of the course, students sit for a test during which they write a number of essays, one of which is based on an unseen poem.

1.3 Conclusion

The next chapter reviews the literature that is directly related to this study's research questions. The reviewed literature focuses on poetry pedagogy, attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry, and research conducted in the field of poetry education. The literature review was crucial in helping me to devise the data gathering tools used in this study (see Chapter 3) as well as in aiding me with the analysis and discussion of the data once the latter was collected (see Chapters 4 and

5). This study's conclusions and recommendations (see Chapter 6) are also aligned with the insights derived from the reviewed literature.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Since this study examines the interplay between attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry, it is important to review the literature focusing on conceptions of poetry, teachers' positioning, poetry pedagogy, creativity, assessment, and other relevant areas. Besides material from the twenty-first and late twentieth centuries, the literature review at times cites sources from earlier eras if they contain views that are still applicable to the present educational context. This review of the literature is meant to act as a backdrop to the discussion of this study's findings (see Chapters 4 and 5).

2.1 Conceptions of Poetry

Despite the fact that within literary theory there exists disagreement as to the exact nature of poetry (Furniss & Bath, 2007), a number of writers, including poets and philosophers, have expressed their conceptions of poetry and in the process have attributed special qualities to it. Their conceptions of poetry have played a major role in shaping contemporary attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry, including those of teachers and students. In fact, Dymoke (2009) asserts that 'There is a fundamental uncertainty underpinning debates about poetry's place in the curriculum (and how poetry might be most effectively taught), which is concerned with its nature' (p. 76). For example, poetry is often bestowed with a creative power, conferring it with the privilege of seemingly having helped to generate being and language. Hamann (1950) affirms that 'Poetry is the mother tongue of the human race' (p. 197) while Vico (1968) claims that 'The most sublime labour of poetry is to give sense and passion to insensate things' (p. 186). For Heidegger (1971), 'Poetry proper is never merely a higher mode (*melos*) of everyday language. It is rather the reverse: everyday language is a forgotten and therefore used-up poem, from which there hardly resounds a call any longer' (p. 208). Besides its creative power, poetry has for long been seen as being akin to philosophy in its capacity to provide insights into the truth. Coleridge (1907) believes that every great poet is at the same time a great philosopher while Sidney (1891) considers poetry to be the most significant and original form of knowing, upon which both philosophy and history rely. According to Perry (1902), 'much actual poetry is far from philosophical' (p. 576), however, there are poets who can be termed philosopher-poets. Amongst these, Perry (1902)

includes Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Dante and Omar Khayyam. He defines the philosopher-poet as someone 'who, having made the philosophical point of view his own, expresses himself in the form of poetry. The philosophical point of view is that from which the universe is comprehended in its totality' (Perry, 1902, p. 589). For the philosopher-poet 'to be philosophical in intelligence, and yet essentially a poet, he must find his universal truth in immediate experience' (Perry, 1902, p. 589). The difference between the philosopher-poet and the philosopher proper is that 'As the poet transcends thought for the sake of experience, the philosopher must transcend experience for the sake of thought' (Perry, 1902, p. 590). Perry (1902) maintains that 'Poetry is another and more circumscribed means of restoring thought to life. By the poet's imagination, and through the art of his expression, thought may be sensuously perceived' (p. 590). This is in line with Hutchison's (1907) conviction that

> Poetry is unique among the arts, for the sensuous medium of poetry is language, the natural vehicle of thought. For this reason poetry is able to present ideas of greater complexity than can any other art, and of developing such ideas more fully. (pp. 697-698)

According to Dannhauser (1995), 'poetry can teach us things beyond the reach of philosophy' and even if it 'is of equal worth to philosophy in teaching understandings it may be that poetry is ultimately of greater worth because reading it yields more pleasure' (p. 191). The poet Charles Simic (1989) believes that 'The labor of poetry is finding ways through language to point to what cannot be put into words' (p. 218). Inspired by Heidegger's (1971) notion that it is not the poet who speaks through a poem but the text itself, Simic (1989) affirms that a 'poem's difficulty is that it presents an experience language cannot get at. Being cannot be represented or uttered…but only hinted at. Writing is always a rough translation from wordlessness into words' (p. 219). For this reason, 'The poem is an attempt at self-recovery, self-recognition, self-remembering, the marvel of being again' (Simic, 1989, p. 221). Similarly, Lepore and Stone (2012) assert that

> poetry exists because we are just as interested in discovering ourselves, and one another, in what we say. Poetry evokes a special kind of thinking — where we interpret ordinary links between language and world and mind as a kind of diagram of the possibilities of experience.

Many of the above pronouncements about poetry by both philosophers and poets infuse it with cachet and make it seem as if it is on a par with philosophy as a gateway to the truth. Theune and Broad (2015) explain that

> Such aesthetic statements, and the axiological insights at their core, are not peripheral to poetry but, very often, comprise a vital part of the action of poem-making. By formulating such statements, poets reveal to themselves and others what characteristics they do and do not appreciate in poetry. (p. 171)

Such pronouncements have played a significant role in forging some of the most prominent attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry operating in contemporary education.

Nevertheless, not all philosophers subscribe to the above views. Most famously of all, Plato in *The Republic* intensifies the ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy due to his disdain for an art form that engages in mimesis and is hence inferior to the discovery of the truth as engaged in by philosophy. For this reason, he thinks that poetry's influence on the young should be closely monitored. Plato's critique of mimesis is problematic because he himself uses mimesis in his dialogues and thinking, relying on it to develop new insights. In fact, Lycos (2009) maintains that 'the idea of philosophy as a total escape from image and metaphor is itself a metaphor – a metaphor introduced by Plato himself'. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle adopts a slightly different view of poetry in that he considers it philosophical in so far as it depicts the nature of humankind. He believes that, due to the universality of its depiction of human nature, it is more philosophical than history. Despite having somewhat contrasting perspectives, both Plato and Aristotle see poetry as a competing cognitive discipline to philosophy. Rather than privileging one over the other or seeing philosophy and poetry as opposites, Burch (2002) considers it better to create 'a genuine space for *thinking* between philosophy and poetry' (p. 2). He argues that 'To subvert philosophy's traditional role as truth-teller in the name of infinite semiosis and the superfluity of meaning is not simply to put poetry by default in the traditional place of privilege' (Burch, 2002, p. 2). In line with Wittgenstein's (1953) idea that the meaning of words is formed through use rather than through some kind of relationship with reality, Fleming and Stevens (2015) maintain that 'it is not necessary to provide pupils with a narrow definition of poetry – this is a

misguided approach to language and will not lead to helpful conclusions' (p. 182). This is because when writers (and by extension educators) are 'Deceived by language into assuming that there is an entity called "poetry" which has a single essence, [they] often give practical advice about ways of teaching poetry which is not universally applicable to all poems' (Fleming & Stevens, 2015, p. 178). Restricted conceptions of poetry shape the way teachers and students think and feel about it, as well as how it is approached in class.

2.1.1 Poetry's Transformative and Illuminating Potential

Some poets and literary critics conceive of poetry (and literature) as having a transformative and illuminating potential. The kind of discourse employed to talk about poetry invariably ends up amplifying poetry's cachet. By vesting poetry with some form of transcendental significance that elevates it above all other genres there is a risk that young people might consider it irrelevant to their everyday lives, viewing it solely as the preserve of academic study. For Mallarmé (1897/1957), poetry's task is to 'endow / with a sense more pure the words of the tribe' (p. 89), a point subsequently taken up by T. S. Eliot (1943). Arnold (1908) maintains that

> Good poetry does undoubtedly tend to form the soul and character; it tends to beget a love of beauty and of truth in alliance together; it suggests, however indirectly, high and noble principles of action, it inspires the emotion so helpful in making principles operative. Hence its extreme importance to all of us; but in our elementary schools its importance seems to me at present quite extraordinary. (p. 60)

Similarly, Stevens (1960) argues that poetry seems 'to have something to do with our self-preservation' and it 'helps us to live our lives' (p. 36). Thompson (1978) concurs with this and says that poetry 'provides the reader with a means of discovering truths about himself and about human experience' (p. 198). Heaney (1980) views 'poetry as divination, poetry as revelation of the self to the self, as restoration of the culture to itself; poems as elements of continuity' (p. 41). According to him, 'Poetry of any power is always deeper than its declared meaning. The secret between the words, the binding element, is often a psychic force that is elusive, archaic and only half-apprehended by maker and audience' (Heaney, 1980, p. 186). In an essay on Keats's conception of poetry, Hughes (1994) shows that he shares the same ideas: 'true poetry…is a healing substance – the vital energy of it is a healing energy, as if it were

produced, in a natural and spontaneous way, by the psychological component of the auto-immune system, the body's self-repair system' (p. 249). Such claims for poetry's potential imbue it with a substantial amount of cachet and help to elevate it onto a pedestal that is seemingly removed from young people's ordinary everyday experiences. It is for this reason that poetry's 'aura of mystery has to be puffed away' (Maley & Moulding, 1985, p. 136).

Literature and poetry in particular are considered capable of not only transforming the individual reader but also of reforming society. Eco (2002/2004) claims that literature possesses a 'true educational function' (p. 13) that influences the kind of person one turns out to be. He states that most of the 'wretches' who sometimes commit heinous crimes end up this way because 'they are excluded from the universe of literature and from those places where, through education and discussion, they might be reached by a glimmer from the world of values that stems from and sends us back again to books' (Eco, 2002/2004, p. 4). In tune with William Carlos Williams's ideas, Edmundson (2004) affirms that reading literature can change a person's life: 'there may be no medium that can help us learn to live our lives as well as poetry, and literature overall, can' (p. 1). He argues that 'Poetry—literature in general—is the major cultural source of vital options for those who find that their lives fall short of their highest hopes'; it acts as 'our best goad toward new beginnings, our best chance for what we might call secular rebirth' (Edmundson, 2004, pp. 2-3). He is convinced of 'the fact…that in literature there abide major hopes for human renovation' (Edmundson, 2004, p. 3). As teachers of literature 'what we need is for people to be open to changing into their own highest mode of being' (Edmundson, 2004, p. 86). In a similar vein, Manguel (2008) posits the question, 'is it possible for stories to change us and the world we live in?' (p. 3). He feels that literature can sometimes 'heal us, illuminate us, and show us the way' (Manguel, 2008, p. 9). In his opinion, 'The language of poetry and stories…groups us under a common and fluid humanity while granting us, at the same time, self-revelatory identities' (Manguel, 2008, p. 26). For Parini (2008), 'Poetry matters because it serves up the substance of our lives, and becomes more than a mere articulation of experience' (p. 181). For these reasons poetry education should 'not be embarrassed to see itself as part of the enterprise of making our culture sufficiently plastic that it can incorporate within a secular world the modes of self-reflection once afforded by religion' (Altieri, 2001, p. 278). These ideas betray the seemingly

common belief that poetry has a transformative function that serves both the reader and society.

However, not everyone agrees that reading poetry can have such a transformative effect on the individual and society. Kermode (1989), for example, rejects the idea that teachers of literature can make people good. He feels that 'reading, as we ought to teach it, can make not a good person, but a subtle, questioning one, always with the possibility of corruption yet richer and more enriching' (Kermode, 1989, p. 57). Whilst conceding that literature may allow us 'to strengthen the self, and to learn its authentic interests', Bloom (2001) disagrees with the idea that literature possesses a broader transformative potential. In his opinion, we read 'not because we can improve anyone else's life by reading better or more deeply' (Bloom, 2001, p. 22). He considers 'The pleasures of reading' to be 'selfish rather than social' and feels 'sceptical of the traditional social hope that care for others may be stimulated by the growth of the individual imagination' (Bloom, 2001, p. 22). He is clearly 'wary of any arguments whatsoever that connect the pleasures of solitary reading to the public good' (Bloom, 2001, p. 22). According to Fish (2008), teaching should not adopt a transformative agenda; when teachers attempt to effect social, moral or political changes by means of education 'they abandon the responsibilities that belong to them by contract in order to take up responsibilities that belong properly to others' (p. 14). This scepticism does not detract from poetry's ability to provide the reader with cognitive and emotive pleasure. It merely acknowledges that to overburden poetry with the kind of expectations traditionally associated with religious arcana is potentially alienating for some readers. In fact, Dymoke (2009) argues that certain conceptions of poetry underscore its 'superiority over other forms of expression and [have] perhaps done the genre no favours by placing it on so high a pedestal' (p. 76). Given that 'excessive reverence for a text does not necessarily improve our understanding of it', Duff and Maley (2007) affirm that by 'de-sacralizing' (p. 8) a text students stand a better chance of feeling confident and overcoming cultural inhibitions.

2.1.2 Poetry and Personal Growth

Tasked with making recommendations on attainment targets and programmes of study for the years of compulsory schooling in England and Wales, Cox's (DES, 1989) working group identified within the English teaching profession five different

views of the subject. These views 'are not the only possible views, they are not sharply distinguishable, and they are certainly not mutually exclusive' (DES, 1989, p. 60). Nonetheless,

> these views needed to be identified before they got on with the complex task of writing an English curriculum, for their audience lay not only within the profession but outside it as well, in the form of politicians and the electorate, to whom Cox and his committee had to sell the idea. (Marshall, 2000, pp. 4-5).

While teachers and trainee teachers recognise and broadly support all five views identified by Cox as shaping the teaching of English (Hardman & Williamson, 1993), two in particular have been especially influential: cultural heritage and personal growth.

The cultural heritage model traces its origins to F. R. Leavis (1943) and is considered to endow students with an appreciation of the canonical works of English Literature. Leavis is associated with New Criticism, which is perhaps still one of the most popular approaches to the study and assessment of poetry in schools (see 2.5.1). In fact, for Eagleton (1996) 'the fact remains that English students in English today are "Leavisites" whether they know it or not' (p. 27). Naylor and Wood (2012) maintain that 'it is very unlikely that…exam questions would be formulated in the way that they are today without the tradition of close reading that was the dominant mode in English universities until the 1970s and beyond' (p. 13). While being highly significant as a model, cultural heritage is perhaps not as influential as the personal growth model.

While the cultural heritage model can be seen as closer to the traditional pole of ideas about English, the personal growth model is nearer to the progressive pole (Pope, 2002, p. 31). As a model it 'emphasises the relationship between language and learning in the individual child, and the role of literature in developing children's imaginative and aesthetic lives' (Cox, 1991, p. 22). Hardman (2001) found that 'both teachers and trainee teachers showed that personal growth was perceived as being the most important model and thought to be the most influential on classroom practice' (p. 21). Its influence probably helps to form teachers' and students' perspectives on literature pedagogy; some of its principles seem to shape their attitudes and beliefs in relation to poetry. Moreover, it can be argued that one of the chief reasons for

poetry's cachet seems to be the notion that poetry possesses some kind of transformative power that allows the individual to achieve personal growth.

The personal growth model is constructed on the premise that the study of literature can serve as an avenue for personal enrichment. In Hourd's (1949) opinion, for example, the primary aim of a literature lesson is 'to provide a means towards a fuller development of personality—a means, again, of growth' (p. 13). A bulletin published by the Scottish Education Department (SED, 1968) echoes this idea and states that 'the value of literature for mental growth cannot be ignored' (pp. 7-8). In a report on the 1966 Dartmouth Seminar, Dixon (1969) shows how teachers and students adopting the personal growth model can 'work together to keep language alive and in so doing…enrich and diversify personal growth' (p. 13). By using what they encounter in literature, students use language to accommodate the world as they experience it and thus achieve personal growth. During a literature lesson students find themselves 'taking on new roles, facing new situations—coming to terms in different ways with new elements of oneself and new levels of human experience' (Dixon, 1969, p. 31). It is for some of these reasons that this pedagogical model is considered to be highly student-centred.

Those teachers who justify the teaching of literature by means of the individual development it generates feel that their adoption of the personal growth model 'involve[s] students as active learners' and helps them 'achieve a sense of self-identity' as well as 'clarify their values' (Rodrigues & Badaczewski, 1978, p. 3). Brumfit (1985) considers it a 'tragedy' that 'literature remains inaccessible to so many people' and this is because 'there is no more easily available source for personal growth than serious literature' (p. 124). He argues that the 'only honest justification for any kind of [literature] teaching' is that as teachers we wish to communicate our own personal need to partake of the experience of reading an 'imaginative literature for the light it sheds on [us] and [our] position as human beings' (Brumfit, 1985, p. 122). Cutajar and Briffa (2004) take these ideas further and state that literature as a subject 'illuminates different areas of human life so that the learner might deepen his/her views on the quality of living. It contributes to the business of living and may alter a person's outlook of the world' (p. 20). By studying literature, 'The learner is educated in modes of thought that equip him/her with a cognitive disposition that may be transferred to other areas of human behaviour and may eventually transform his/her view of life in general' (Cutajar & Briffa, 2004, p. 20). These arguments emphasise the singular

significance of literature as a valuable source of personal enrichment for students. However, the rhetoric used by those describing this kind of literature-based enrichment might also run the risk of distancing students from literary texts due to the perceived profundity attached to something so overwhelmingly laden with cachet.

Supposedly, the main advantages of the personal growth model are that it 'demystifies literature' and that students are involved holistically; hence the whole process is 'potentially highly motivating' (Lazar, 1993, p. 25). Despite the value of personal engagement with literature espoused by this model (McGuinn, 2005), there is the danger that students cease to interrogate a text as a social construct with a particular positioning agenda and focus all the intention on themselves rather than on it (Kress, 1994; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996). Moreover, another downside is that if the transformative and illuminating potential of literature is heavily underscored the cachet of literary texts is overinflated and this might lead students to feel alienated from something that is perhaps a bit too abstruse for it to form part of their everyday lives. In fact, Gribble (1983) maintains that literary studies should not set 'the *general* emotional development and psychic health of the individual [as]…a primary objective' but they should be 'concerned to develop the adequacy and appropriateness of students' emotional responses to literary works [and]…this necessarily entails the development of the adequacy and appropriateness of their perceptions of literary works' (p. 108). By extension, when teachers overly accentuate the transformative potential of poetry they might unwittingly lead students to view it with too much awe and this might cause any plans for poetry-based personal growth to rebound adversely.

Despite their Romantic origins, the notions discussed above still wield a considerable amount of influence in contemporary poetry education. According to Furniss and Bath (2007), 'The fact that so many people hold Romantic assumptions about art does not mean that they are true, or always insightful; it indicates, instead, how such assumptions continue to be reproduced in education and the media' (p. 10). Given the powerful influence of such notions, it might be helpful to temper them by means of the insights provided by more recent schools of thought, thus permitting the reading of poetry through different critical lenses (see 2.5). For example, one possible way of approaching the teaching of poetry in the twenty-first century is through 'a creative synthesis between essentially Romantic traditions of English teaching, and the radical tenets of critical literacy' (Stevens, 2014, p. 40). A believer in the significance of the role that critical literacy could play within English pedagogy, Stevens (2014)

helps to define it by affirming that it 'must surely centre upon some notion of literacy as a means of deconstructing multiple texts through a culturally critical lens, seeking to uncover/discover the hegemonic relationships that underpin such texts' (p. 32). Taking his cue from Giroux (1997), Stevens (2011a) explains that the teaching of literature should be a blend of the language of possibility and the language of critique, this entailing the creative use of texts in class through 'celebratory intertextuality and critical questioning' (p. 55). While considering 'it is the function of the teaching of literature, as an art, to awaken and stimulate the imagination to suggest how things might be other than they are', Stevens (2005) acknowledges that poetry is especially 'well suited to cutting through the facade of familiarity of so much language in use, and critically uncovering the relationships beneath' (pp. 261-262). The teacher's role within this pedagogy is to balance critique and possibility by managing the dialectical tension between the two (Stevens & McGuinn, 2004, p. 132).

2.2 Teachers as Poetry Readers

In his analysis of Vygotsky's and Piaget's theories on play and drama, McGuinn (2014b) states that 'the capacity of even the smallest human beings to take pleasure in patterns, images, movements and sounds simply for their own sake puts a marker down for the power of the aesthetic impulse' (p. 10). This suggests that the ability to enjoy poetry is almost intrinsic to the human experience. Considering poetry teaching as 'located at the heart of a teacher's practice' (p. 172), Holbrook (1961) believes that enjoyment of poetry should be something manifested by all students and teachers. Harrison and Gordon (1983) share the same sentiment and feel that if teachers were to enjoy poetry, students would benefit even more from their poetry lessons. Smith (2008) maintains that 'teachers could not be expected to enthuse their students about poetry unless they were themselves enthusiastic' (p. 7). Teachers' enthusiasm for poetry plays a crucial role in boosting students' engagement but this is difficult to achieve if teachers refrain from reading poetry. In order for students to be encouraged to read poetry for personal pleasure it is probably important for teachers to position themselves as readers of poetry.

A number of studies highlight the importance of teachers positioning themselves as readers as a means of encouraging students to engage in extensive reading. According to Day and Bamford (1998), 'Keeping in mind that they are role models may change teachers' perceptions of the classroom and their role as teachers'

(p. 136). Teachers who position themselves as readers engage in classroom practices that enable them to 'guide students and participate with them as members of a reading community' (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 47). Such practices boost students' motivation to engage in extensive reading and allow them to see reading as a pleasurable activity because of their perception of teachers as role models. For Day and Bamford (2002), 'Effective extensive reading teachers are themselves readers, teaching *by example* the attitudes and behaviors of a reader' (p. 140). They are teachers who are willing to 'talk with students about their reading lives' (Commeyras, Bisplinghoff, & Olson, 2003, p. 164) and consider it important to inspire a love of reading by acting as readers who teach.

Research suggests that teachers need to embrace the idea that they themselves play a crucial part in helping students to become enthusiastic readers. According to Hedgcock and Ferris (2009), 'An obvious but often neglected way to do this is to model the behaviors of an enthusiastic reader' (p. 227). Between 2006 and 2010, the United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA, 2008) sought to address the problem of low PIRLS results amongst children in England by means of a project aimed at exploring the reading habits of primary school teachers. This project aimed to provide teachers with the necessary support so that they could build communities of readers in their classrooms. Similarly, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE, 2009) in the USA created guidelines for teachers to enable them to form book groups as professionals. The problem of reluctant young readers is compounded by the fact that in some cases the teachers themselves are not keen on reading, especially when it comes to poetry. This is partly due to the fact that 'some teachers associate poetry solely with school preparation rather than with relaxation' (Dymoke, 2009, p. 82). A lack of poetry reading makes it difficult for teachers to provide students with 'access to poetry in its infinite variety' (Dymoke, 2003, p. 172). A UK study found that while 73% of teachers had read for pleasure during the last month, less than 2% opt to read poetry (Cremin, Bearne, Mottram, & Goodwin, 2009, pp. 204-205). The same study found that 58% of teachers could name only one or two poets, with 22% being unable to name any poets at all (Cremin et al., 2009, p. 207). Such facts lead Motion (as cited in Shepherd, 2010) to declare that 'We need to better equip teachers to engage with a range of poetry – wider than is presently on offer.' The children's poet John Rice (as cited in Xerri, 2012b) confirms this view by indicating that he is disheartened with teachers' knowledge and reading of poetry:

I don't think they do read it as much as we suppose they do because sometimes if I mention a poet's name to a teacher they don't know who that person is and if I mention certain poems or certain anthologies it's a very restricted canon of work that teachers have read and it's usually poetry from very deep in the past. (p. 114)

This is corroborated by the views of Michael Rosen (as cited in Xerri, 2014c) who believes that very few teachers read poetry for pleasure. The significance of teachers positioning themselves as readers of poetry as a means of encouraging young readers is highlighted by the results of a study that aimed to develop 43 teachers' stance as readers who teach (Cremin, 2010). The results demonstrate that 'teachers' increased knowledge, pleasure and use of poetry widened the children's repertoires and experience of poetry, positively influencing their understanding and attitudes' (Cremin, 2010, p. 223). This implies that when teachers position themselves as poetry readers they stand a better chance of positively influencing students' attitudes towards poetry, enabling them to read it for pleasure and not just for study purposes. Teachers' enthusiasm for poetry plays a crucial role in boosting students' engagement but this is difficult to achieve if teachers refrain from reading poetry. A lack of poetry reading on the part of teachers is one of the main obstacles toward them becoming creative practitioners. In fact, Stevens (2007) argues that those teachers who have limited experience of poetry are probably incapable of adopting a creative pedagogy.

2.3 Poetry in the Curriculum

The status accorded to poetry in the curriculum plays a role in determining the value it is given by young people. A curriculum that sidelines poetry in favour of more *useful* subjects can be seen as somewhat misguided by those who 'believe there has been a woeful neglect of the enormous contribution poetry can make to young people's knowledge and intellectual development' (Dymoke, Lambirth, & Wilson, 2013, p. 1). For Pike (2000a), it is disconcerting to note that 'many schools still allocate a certain portion of a term or even year to the study of poetry rather than making sure that pupils experience the genre frequently' (p. 41). According to Stables (2002), 'educators can easily fall into the Platonic trap of seeing poetry as of less importance than science and mathematics' (p. 30). The dangers of such neglect seem quite clear. For example, poetry's place in the curriculum in New Zealand is

jeopardised by a 'cycle of deprivation which results from the neglect of poetry in the English programme, whereby a pattern of disadvantage is set up for the education of the next generation of students' (O'Neill, 2006, p. 247). It can be argued that 'unless education systems expose students to the study of poetry in depth, it is a value that eludes or escapes most, unnoticed and unmissed'; the main consequence being that in the long run such 'pedagogical bypassing becomes profoundly entrenched' (Weaven & Clark, 2011, p. 83). Dymoke (2012) affirms that in New Zealand and England 'poetry could be seen as an increasingly unfamiliar text' (p. 408) for young people. In New Zealand 'the lack of direct reference to poetry in examination objectives could ultimately lead to a cultural impoverishment of the curriculum' whereas in England 'poetry is becoming ever more synonymous with testing' (Dymoke, 2012, pp. 407-408). Such extreme situations undermine poetry's place in the curriculum and the most acute effect of such an approach is probably that children's creative engagement with poetry is impoverished.

Poetry can be more engaging if attitudes, beliefs and practices are adequately addressed. Xerri (2013a) shows how teachers' attitudes and beliefs affect their classroom practices and influence the way students approach a poem, most often undermining the enjoyment of poetry in class. Poetry amongst young people has been deemed to be 'marginal' (Parry, 1972, p. 112), 'unfashionable' (Maley & Moulding, 1985, p. 134), and 'irrelevant' (McIrvin, 2000, p. 89). Motion's report for Booktrust (2010) expresses the concern that for some students poetry is 'dull and pointless…an elitist art form' (p. 12) that is taught in such a manner as to estrange them even further. Snapper (2013) posits that 'few students are likely to start A Level Literature with wholly positive attitudes towards poetry, and some will harbour quite negative feelings, often particularly disliking the way that poems are "requisitioned" for exam learning' (p. 37). While it seems to be widely acknowledged that 'positive experiences at school are…important to laying the foundation for lifetime engagement with poetry' (BOP Consulting, 2009, p. 5), it is also true that out of the different genres that students come in contact with when studying English, poetry seems to be the one that is most often associated with negative feelings (Blake, 2008; Burdan, 2004; Motion, 2009). This is partly because of the belief that poetry is inherently difficult. Taking their cue from Steiner (1978), Fleming and Stevens (2015) elaborate on the reasons for which poetry might be considered difficult; these include the barriers to understanding created by a poem's vocabulary, allusions,

references, background information, and emotional content. Moreover, poetry as genre may also pose difficulties for students if they approach it

> with inappropriate expectations derived from their experience of reading other texts… If pupils approach the reading of a poem expecting it to yield up meaning in the same way that prose does, it is not surprising that they find the genre difficult. Tolerance of ambiguity and a readiness to accept plurality of meaning are more necessary when reading poetry than other literary genres. (Fleming & Stevens, 2015, p. 185)

This is in line with the poet Geoffrey Hill's (as cited in Potts, 2002) idea that 'There is no reason why a work of art should be instantly accessible.' Similarly, the poet George Szirtes (2014) critiques Jeremy Paxman's (as cited in Flood, 2014) denunciation of contemporary poetry as obscure by suggesting that poetry needs to be felt rather than just fathomed. Cranston (2003) argues that 'the strange and foreign and provocative will be better understood and verbalized if we are willing, initially, to "suspend the demand for immediate intelligibility," allowing the text entry into the affective and imaginative levels of experience first' (p. 965). Encouraging teachers and students to develop their attitudes and beliefs in relation to poetry will most probably enhance engagement in poetry lessons.

For this reason, research suggests that the curriculum should deter teachers from focusing exclusively on canonical poems or bequeathing onto students a reverential attitude towards poetry. The fact that students 'are still commonly introduced to poetry as something which is to be intoned reverentially or read in silence' means that they 'view canonical literature as something which is inaccessible and irrelevant to them' (Gregory, 2013, p. 120). This is part of the 'the stultifying nature of the curriculum which frames English education in UK schools' (Gregory, 2013, p. 120). Rosen (as cited in Xerri, 2014c) too refers to the reverence with which some teachers treat poetry, something that is also indicated by earlier research on teachers' attitudes toward poetry:

> There seems considerable evidence to suggest that, despite the rhetoric, despite the lip-service paid to the importance of poetry, very many teachers do find considerable problems in practice. They often display a misplaced reverence that causes them to place poetry on a pedestal either as a result of their own academic experience, making them feel frustrated when their best efforts are rewarded with incomprehension, or because their lack of knowledge causes them to defer to the mythology that on a

> pedestal is where it belongs. In consequence they may feel rather frightened by their temerity in approaching so close. (Benton, 1984, p. 326)

Snapper (2006a) argues that the character of the poetry teacher John Keating in *Dead Poets Society* 'seems clearly to represent many of the dominant attitudes and positions and significant concerns of literature teachers here and now', partly due to his 'reverence for the literary text' (pp. 27-28). Teachers' attitudes might help to make poetry appear less accessible for students and might bolster the misconception that it is one of the most challenging genres to tackle in class. This reverence is present in a number of works on poetry's place in education (Holbrook, 1961; Hughes, 1967; Mole, 1973), works that all seem to see a potential for spirituality in poetry. In fact, Skelton (1978) asserts that 'Certainly poetry does imply attitudes which can be described as religious' (p. 126), both in terms of how it is perceived as a text and how it is revered by the reader. For example, for New Criticism, 'Poetry was the new religion… The poem itself was as opaque to rational enquiry as the Almighty himself: it existed as a self-enclosed object, mysteriously intact in its own unique being' (Eagleton, 1996, p. 40). Nonetheless, 'Whereas some earlier Romantics tended to bow low in reverent silence before the unfathomable mystery of the text, the New Critics deliberately cultivated the toughest, most hard-headed techniques of critical dissection' (Eagleton, 1996, p. 42), which were essential in order to arrive at the *objective* meaning of the text. Dymoke (2003) considers it 'interesting to note how schools are able to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through their teaching of literature, and poetry in particular' (p. 178). However, if poetry has 'become a more socially acceptable alternative to scripture', Dymoke (2003) contemplates whether this will 'also cause some teachers to shy away from fully engaging with the genre' (p. 179). By treating poetry as if it were sacred, teachers might unwittingly risk alienating students from it. Xerri (2013a) argues that 'Demystifying poetry is crucial if students are to see poetry as something accessible and enjoyable, something they can read on their own without the teacher acting as a gatekeeper to meaning' (p. 135). However, reaching that stage might first of all entail providing teachers 'with the opportunity and support to investigate all facets of their curriculum, particularly those that cause them fear and anxiety' (Weaven & Clark, 2013, p. 210). This is important given that teachers play a crucial role in inspiring young people to enjoy poetry; the way they approach poems

in class can help either stimulate a lifelong passion for the genre or an equally vehement rejection of it.

Some teachers' sense of alienation from poetry and their ingrained beliefs about how it should be approached in a lesson act as a stumbling block in the effort to engage as many students as possible with poetry. According to O'Neill (2006), 'That poetry can be taught holistically and dynamically at all levels is clearly possible. Much seems to depend upon the attitude, resourcefulness and determination of the teacher' (p. 119). The absence of such qualities might be due to teachers' own experiences as students of poetry. Rosen (as cited in Xerri, 2014c), explains that when it comes to poetry in the classroom some teachers feel 'nervous' or 'inadequate' due to their childhood experiences: 'a lot of poetry teaching leaves people with a sense of a series of mild humiliations. There was a poem, there was a teacher and they felt they didn't know enough; the teacher knew more' (p. 115). Similarly, Kelly and Collins (2009) point out how many trainee teachers share 'negative experiences of poetry in school (or no experience) and…the excessive emphasis on form (over expression and purpose) led to an approach that was often formulaic' (p. 28). Smith's (2008) research shows that 'many teachers had few good experiences of poetry when they themselves were schoolchildren' (p. 7). Teachers reported finding it 'so difficult and so tedious' that they were 'put off poetry for many years' (Smith, 2008, p. 7). Their misconception that poetry is 'difficult and mysterious' places them 'in the same boat as the majority of the British public, who don't read contemporary poetry and are rather suspicious of it' (Smith, 2008, p. 7). According to Motion (as cited in Gibbons, 2000), teachers need to be provided with the opportunity to 'discuss how to get over the mental block that poetry was difficult to teach and somehow irrelevant'. The idea that poetry is a difficult medium can 'lead potential readers…to reject its advances' (Dymoke, 2009, p. 78). Teachers need to join forces with poets-in-schools in the drive to 'demystify poetry' (Motion as cited in Gibbons, 2000). This is significant because out of all the different text types that teachers are expected to teach, 'poetry is the one which seems to present the most people with the most challenges' (Dymoke, 2009, p. 71). Motion (as cited in Shepherd, 2010) is concerned with the possibility that teachers are partly responsible for alienating students from poetry: 'The appetite for poetry is fundamental to us as human beings. What on earth have we done, producing an education system in this country which allows the majority of people, by the time they hit puberty, to think

otherwise?' Teachers' apprehension in relation to poetry might have an effect on students' engagement with the genre and it could lead them to shrink away from it once they stop studying it at school. This sense of apprehension is perhaps further amplified by a curriculum that hinders teachers from having a say in relation to what kind of poetry they do in class and the manner in which they teach it.

In his keynote speech at the 2012 NATE Conference, Motion discussed how the overbearing pressure of the curriculum and assessment sometimes influences teachers' approach to poetry in the classroom:

> You as teachers of English are asked to do things around poems as part of the National Curriculum which I think…run the risk at least of putting things the wrong way round; that's to say of looking at poems for what they have to say about a certain thing, a certain theme, rather than looking at the poetry of poetry.

The ideal situation would be for teachers to strike a balance between what a poem has to say and its poetry, which seems to transcend whatever meanings are conveyed by the poem:

> We want somehow to get – within a system that has to be assessed – we want to get to the state in which we're able to value a poem for what it precisely has to say about a subject that it engages with but at the same time we want to celebrate the fact that it runs off over the horizon with us lagging behind, runs over the horizon taking its meanings with it. That seems to me to be the ideal balance that we're always in pursuit of. (Motion, 2012)

The practice of treating poetry as a genre set apart from all others, because of the notion that it is abstruse, is as damaging as the practice of encouraging only conventional ways of responding to poetry. Associating poetry with some form of underlying meaning that can only be extracted through a methodical analysis of every single word on the page only helps to inflate its cachet in a way that does poetry a huge disservice. For Motion (2012), 'the poetry of poems is the essential thing, but it's also very vulnerable to any system of assessment'. Nevertheless, despite the influence of the curriculum and assessment on teachers' pedagogy, changes in poetry education will not happen solely by means of changes at the curricular and assessment levels. In fact, O'Neill (2006) expresses the hope that 'Obstacles set up by a seemingly assessment-driven curriculum will not…deter effective teachers from

implementing the pedagogical strategies they have hopefully assimilated in their training, and from converting the diffident' (p. 119). In order for teachers to counteract the effect of those factors that consort with one another to shape the way poetry is sometimes approached in class, they need to reflect on the reasons for such an approach. Empowering teachers by developing their attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry seems important in order for them to engage students in a variety of ways.

2.3.1 Choice of Poetry

The MC English syllabus specifies that students need to be prepared for the poetry component in the examination by studying at least one of three set texts upon which students will have to answer an essay question. At Junior College it is the head of department in consultation with the rest of the staff who decides which collection students should study in preparation for the exam. The practice of providing students with access to a limited number of set texts might dampen students' appreciation of the diversity of poetry as a genre. According to Brumfit (1985), the ultimate goal of a course like MC English should be that of making students feel 'intensively involved in some form of creative engagement with literature' (p. 114). This entails encouraging them to read as broadly as possible by going beyond the set texts, discovering new texts for themselves, and being able to read them critically. This is in line with Carter and Long's (1991) idea that literature courses should be able 'to produce accurate *and* fluent readers and to synthesise in-breadth and in-depth approaches to reading literature' (p. 5). With this in mind, Snapper (2006a) criticises the atomistic model of literary study associated with A-level English—in which a number of set texts are studied over a two-year period—for 'perpetuating the low status of a broader conception of literary knowledge and study' (p. 30). He suggests that students need to be given the opportunity of engaging in 'explorations of literary issues, topics or debates, or…wide reading activities'; the detailed study of set texts needs to be 'framed with broader contextual study of genre and period, and augmented with readings of critical texts, and creative assignments' (Snapper, 2006a, p. 31). It seems as if one of the ideal outcomes of a poetry course should be that of ensuring that students are able to read both broadly and intensively.

As regards the literary criticism component, the MC English syllabus leaves it up to the individual teacher as to which materials to use for exam preparation

purposes. Parry (1972), Oakley (1981), and Dymoke (2003, 2009) champion the idea of giving teachers the freedom to choose the poems they wish their students to engage with. However, it is also suggested that when they are given this sense of agency teachers should use it to develop students' awareness of the broad diversity of poetry through a careful selection of 'relevant' texts that give students the impression they are learning 'something useful' (Widdowson, 1975, p. 83). The latter though might be considered to be in tension with the idea that poetry need not be seen as having an instrumental purpose (e.g. Bloom, 2001). Teachers are advised to choose 'poems which can make contact, in an intimate way, with the child's most vital experience and interests' (Whitehead, 1966, p. 99). This is important because when teaching poetry to young people, teachers 'have to find ways of showing that it has relevance to the real world and to their own problems and concerns in living in it' (Whitehead, 1966, p. 120). Heaney (1980) himself indicates that when people engage with poetry it is because the poet 'has spoken something essential to you, something you recognise instinctively as a true sounding of yourself and your experience' (p. 44). Snapper (2006a) feels that teachers need to be given 'a considerably greater degree of freedom about which texts to teach – and to what ends' in order 'to explore a wider range of critical and creative responses' (p. 30). His hope is that teachers succeed in quelling 'many students' fear and dislike of poetry by allowing space for them to get to grips with the nature of poetry as an art form and some of its uses rather than focusing on discrete analysis of individual poems or volumes' (Snapper, 2006b, p. 32). In order for this to happen, it seems as if teachers' choice of poetry needs to be varied and engaging.

The set poetry texts on the MC English syllabus largely consist of works written by canonical poets prior to the mid-twentieth century. Given the dominance of dead white men over literature syllabi internationally (Garner, 2013; Pett, 2015), it might be important to diversify students' exposure to poetry, especially in an increasingly multicultural society such as that in Malta. One way of doing this is by providing students with access to multicultural poetry, which is typically associated with ethnic minorities and other socioeconomically marginalized and underrepresented groups. By engaging students with multicultural poetry, teachers can help students become intercultural communicators (Xerri, 2015a). This is due to the fact that 'literature and the arts contribute to the formation of a convivial culture, one that is tolerant and spontaneously at ease with its rich diversity' (López Ropero

& Moreno Álvarez, 2011, p. 102). Colby and Lyon (2004) gave a group of teachers the opportunity to examine their attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to the use of multicultural texts in the classroom. They discovered that these teachers felt as if they had opened their eyes to the problems faced by a number of students when presented with material that is predominantly white European-American in origin. These teachers became aware of the fact that if students cannot identify with a text their level of engagement with the reading process diminishes. For this reason, Dong (2005) posits that 'there is an urgent need for English teachers to increase their sensitivity to cultural differences and develop teaching skills to conduct classroom discussions that promote cross-cultural understanding and culturally varied ways of living and knowing' (p. 367). In order not to risk alienating students, teachers need to embrace the responsibility of making careful reading choices and avoid perpetuating practices that manifest a complete disregard for multiculturalism. The use of multicultural poetry in the classroom entails a number of benefits for students, including: doing meaningful language work, expressing cultural empathy, and valuing plurilingualism (Xerri, 2012a, 2015a; Xerri & Xerri Agius, 2015). When students read and respond to multicultural poetry they are not only using English in order to communicate about something meaningful but also reflecting on the diversity that exists within and outside their own classroom. Their contributions to the lesson are thus much more engaging. Obied (2013) advocates for 'a culturally inclusive curriculum' that uses poetry to encourage students 'to understand the richness and variety of a language and gain agency in the process, as they actively make meaning and enter dialogues around texts' (pp. 152-153). Obviously one of the best ways for students to be exposed to multicultural poetry is through their teachers' familiarity with it. Reading plenty of multicultural poetry will not just enable teachers to determine which texts may be used with their students but will also allow them to position themselves as role models and thus overcome one of the challenges in the cultivation of a reading culture.

Another kind of student contribution to poetry lessons that is sometimes entirely ignored consists of their preferences as to what is read in class, which some teachers might see as their prerogative. Connolly and Smith (2003) affirm that, even if as teachers we were to allow students to be involved in the choice of texts, 'We cannot remove our authority. We are older and more experienced readers. But we can even the playing field, at least somewhat, by encountering poetry for the first time

along with our students' (p. 239). This is in line with the idea that 'students are more likely to be engaged if they have some choice about what they will study and the texts they will read' (Beach, Appleman, Hynds, & Wilhelm, 2006, pp. 7-8). By being empowered to choose what they would like to read in class, students will be encouraged to stop seeing themselves as passive recipients of knowledge. Ultimately, the purpose of any poetry lesson should not just be that of helping students to pass their examination; what is even more important is to inspire them to continue reading poetry for pleasure once they actually finish their course. As Lambirth (2007) points out, 'If young people see poetry attached to hard graft and analysis, they will see no reason to incorporate it into their leisure time' (p. 14). Critical reading skills are of crucial significance but the development of such skills should not come at the expense of student engagement with poetry. That is perhaps why the pedagogy employed in the teaching of poetry at A-level should be sufficiently varied and cultivate ways of boosting students' voices and choices (Xerri, 2014a).

2.4 Poetry Pedagogy

The editors of a special issue of *English Teaching: Practice and Critique* devoted to poetry pedagogy posed the questions, 'Is poetry an outmoded form of expression, resting high on a pedestal, unseen and seldom encountered except in an examination? Is it a text to be quarried for techniques?' (Manuel, Petrosky, & Dymoke, 2013, p. 2). In another special issue devoted to poetry in the classroom, the editors of *English Journal* asked readers, 'How can teachers ensure that poetry lives in, through, and with all the young people who will populate and lead our future generations?' (Gorlewski & Gorlewski, 2015, p. 11). These questions seem to indicate the significance that poetry pedagogy plays in making poetry an engaging genre that is not only enjoyed at school but continues to be a vital part of young people's lives long after they finish their studies.

Students' engagement with a poem seems to be one of the most desirable objectives of poetry pedagogy. In fact, it is claimed that 'The key to active, involved reading of literature is engagement with a text' (Beach et al., 2006, p. 170). The way this engagement is instigated in a lesson entails a sense of enjoyment on the part of teachers and students. The poet T. S. Eliot (1956) does not conceive of '*enjoyment* and *understanding* as distinct activities—one emotional and the other intellectual' (p. 540). The two activities are interdependent and 'To understand a poem comes to the

same thing as to enjoy it for the right reasons' (Eliot, 1956, p. 540). According to Fleming and Stevens (2015), 'It is a delicate pedagogical challenge to ensure that explicit knowledge enhances rather then detracts from enjoyment and appreciation' (p. 177). A pedagogy that fosters students' engagement is characterised by a number of qualities, a few examples of which are outlined below. For Whitehead (1966), 'what matters in our poetry lessons is the occasion when, for someone at least, reading a poem is felt to be important in a personal sense, a significant mode of experience' (p. 93). Stratta, Dixon and Wilkinson (1973) point out that 'The disappearance of the dais necessarily implies new relationships between pupil and teacher', and thus the adoption of a new pedagogy: 'the teacher needs to be more akin to a producer, with the pupils as actors; or a leader of a group preparing a presentation, where pupils explore texts in an active manner learning in the course of performing' (p. 44). This is akin to a 'dialogic engagement' (Blake, 2008, p. 29) with poetry. Similarly, Millum (2008) suggests that there needs to be 'an *involvement* with poems… A creative involvement in which we are not just looking *at* poems and making notes *on* them but getting *into* them' (p. 22). He thinks that by means of such involvement students not only improve their grades but also 'develop a lifelong passion' for poetry; that is why it is 'worth taking the time, now and then, to really try to get under the skin of some of the poems you encounter' (Millum, 2008, p. 23). Developing this kind of long-term engagement might entail combining poetry and critical thinking (Hakes, 2008) or teaching poetry through an interdisciplinary approach, such as by allying it with music, drama and art (Stevens, 2011b). It might also involve dissociating poetry from the strict confines of the classroom as happens in the flipped classroom model, which is meant to reinforce active learning and thus prevent a teacher-centred, transmissive pedagogy (Keengwe, Onchwari, & Oigara, 2014). A pedagogy that bolsters student engagement seems to necessitate not only a reconceptualization of the approaches that are typically adopted in a poetry lesson but also a reconfiguration of the traditional stances adopted by teachers and students.

Forty years ago, the Bullock Report in the UK criticized certain endemic problems in the teaching of poetry, especially the use of an analytical approach that prioritises specific critical judgements and by means of which the teacher approaches a poem as 'a repository of answers to which he possesses the key' (DES, 1975, p. 131). Since then poetry pedagogy has not changed all that much. The teaching of poetry in post-secondary education in Malta is meant to help students develop the

skills to read and write about a variety of poems in a critical manner. Developing such skills might sometimes involve a tortuous process that can lead teachers to adopt a pedagogy that emphasises modelling the style of close reading, which arguably pushes students into the role of bystanders thus sacrificing personal engagement. The teacher is at the centre of the arena and the students are meant to be learning by observing the master reader as he or she unravels the poem. The teacher might ask questions but 'When the whole class and the teacher tackle a poem together, what tends to happen is more like an oral comprehension test than a genuine discussion' (D'Arcy, 1978, p. 148). The students feel they have to provide the right answers to a set of questions that might not be genuinely seeking new information but are there to test the kind of understanding the teacher is looking for. A teacher-led process of inductive questioning seems to be the most traditional approach to poetry in the classroom (Dias & Hayhoe, 1988; Fleming & Stevens, 2015). This means that the lesson ends up being dominated by teacher talk. McRae (1991) argues that 'Teacher input, to be assimilated and reproduced, invites static almost mechanical learning. Interaction, learner involvement, inductive learning, all contribute to making the process dynamic' (p. 8). The prevalence of such teacher input is a by-product of the act of teachers positioning themselves as 'gatekeepers' through whose 'offices' (Tweddle, Adams, Clarke, Scrimshaw, & Walton, 1997, p. 50) students read the poem. Hughes's (2009) description of her experiences at school probably resonates with those of many teachers and students:

> Our teachers encouraged us to find the specific meaning in the text, placed there by the author, whether intentionally or not. There was one meaning that could be uncovered and we were trained to do so. Often we didn't need to search for meaning at all because the 'correct' meaning was served up to us by the teacher; all we needed to do was listen and regurgitate the answers in our essays. (pp. 21-22)

Such pedagogy gives primacy to the teacher's role in the critical reading of poetry and risks underestimating the significance of student engagement, with the consequence that poetry ends up being perceived as something that can only be read within the confines of the classroom and only under the supervision of the teacher. This is something that also happened to Shakespearean drama once it became part of English as taught in schools and universities (Murphy, 2008).

    The stance adopted by teachers during poetry lessons can help perpetuate the

myth that a poem is an enigmatic text that can only be made accessible by means of the teacher's elucidation of its meaning. By adopting 'the position of supreme arbiter' (Stratta et al., 1973, p. 41), a teacher will not help students develop their own personal response to a text and will merely compel them to accept the opinion of an expert reader. This only serves to make students 'passive' and leads them to perceive reading as if it were 'a kind of detective work, a cracking of codes and solving of mysteries, having little or no relevance to life as they live it beyond school' (Stratta et al., 1973, p. 42). In turn, a mechanical analysis of poetry becomes the only appropriate way of reading a poem. In criticising such an approach, Fleming and Stevens (2015) posit that

> The argument…is not that poems should never be analysed; it is after all a key means of developing sensitivity to language; appropriate analysis can inform emotional and aesthetic response. The point is that the teacher needs to be aware of the difficulties which may arise and take steps to ensure that they do not become an insurmountable barrier. (p. 185)

An analytical approach should ideally be counterbalanced with activities that 'guide students into the study of poems without forcing them to accept the teacher's interpretations' (Elkins, 1976, p. 190). Such activities would hopefully tap students' creativity and transform them from passive into active readers of poetry. According to Wright (2005), 'brilliant teachers understand that, while they don't have the author in the classroom, they do have readers, and readers are central to the process' (p. 44). For this reason, Naylor and Wood (2012) argue that 'to motivate and really engage young people with poetry, we have to engage with critical ideas about the way that readers respond to texts and bring their own responses to texts, particularly poetic ones' (p. 15). This would entail a familiarity on the part of teachers with reader-response theory, in particular the works of Rosenblatt (1994, 1995) and Iser (1978, 1988), both of whom underscore the significance of the active role that readers play when reading texts and generating meanings. Reader-response theory 'can help with how we approach teaching poetry, with regard to making poetry fun and empowering pupils to contribute their own ideas with confidence and enthusiasm' (Naylor & Wood, 2012, p. 21). Ensuring that teachers possess the necessary knowledge of reader-response theory might serve to realign the balance of power in the poetry classroom and invite a more active role on students' part.

The way poetry is approached in the classroom also affects students' reading of a poem:

> If classroom teaching has encouraged a view of poetry as something with a meaning stubbornly hidden in the text and revealed only to the fortunate few, many readers are likely to do no more than engage in making probing guesses, hoping that somehow the poem's meaning will occur to them. (Dias & Hayhoe, 1988, p. 35)

Some teachers attempt to give students the impression that the analytical approach used to unearth a poem's meaning is objective. Even when students come to realise that this is not so they still feel 'inhibited about trusting their own response' and embark on the unseen component 'in fear and trembling' (Scott, 1989, p. 33). Such an approach obviously 'implies that poetry is something locked away like the best china, and that a special key needs to be fetched before you can get at it' (Strauss, 1993, p. vii). Consequently, the misconception arises that since the teacher is the one holding the key students should rely on their teacher to be given access to a poem's mysteries.

A pedagogy that seeks to broaden students' definitions of poetry seems to be a significant way of countering their attitudes and practices in relation to the genre. Fleming and Stevens (2015) consider it important that students be encouraged to pay 'attention to the genre itself, not to pursue strict definitions of poetry but to examine the way different texts require different types of reading' (p. 185). In agreement with this, Stibbs (2000) maintains that when teaching poems 'we too easily slip into discussing their content or extratextual import rather than their intratextual, aesthetic features, because poems use the same medium as social and moral discourse—words' (p. 37). He considers it a problem that 'Poetry teaching has been spoiled by an understandable succumbing to the temptation to treat poetry as if it were perversely if mellifluously worded prose' (Stibbs, 2000, pp. 40-41). For this reason he calls for renewed attention to aesthetics in poetry pedagogy so that students may come to appreciate the effects of sound and structure rather than focusing solely on meaning. Barrs and Styles (2013) concur with this idea and state that 'one of the big problems of poetry education is that it is the easily identifiable formal features of poems that often become the focus of attention, and that assume disproportionate importance in the minds of both teachers and students' (p. 184). Ensuring that teachers' and

students' definition of poetry is adequately enlarged and that the genre's aesthetic features are prioritized might lead to increased engagement in the poetry classroom.

Benton (1999) reports that 'far from facilitating pupils' learning and engagement with poetry some teachers felt constrained to adopt strategies which they felt actively hindered it' (p. 521). These strategies are mainly those associated with a highly analytical approach to the teaching of poetry that assigns teachers the privileged role of explaining to their students the hidden meaning of a poem. Dymoke (2003) criticises 'The notion of poetry as a puzzle' which she finds to be 'a common perception among students (and their teachers) who engage in a hunt for the missing clue which will help them solve the poem' (p. 3). Fleming and Stevens (2015) point out that 'The problem with the traditional inductive question and answer approach to poetry is that it rarely made enough room for pupils to engage with the text' (p. 186). Burdan (2004) agrees with this and claims that 'For many students, literary analysis is primarily a means by which their teachers demarcate the gap between the students' naive or inept readings of literature and their own, more sophisticated ones' (p. 23). Rather than confidently exploring the poem, students seek to guess what the teacher already knows is hidden in the text.

The belief that reading poetry involves an interaction with the poem during which the reader discovers its meaning is responsible for such a lack of confidence on the students' part. Fleming and Stevens (2015) maintain that

> An obsession with 'complete' understanding which contains a misguided view of the way language has meaning may prevent us from using and enjoying the text. The resonance of language can haunt us and continue to unfold before we grasp its full meaning. Even the concept of 'full' meaning may be suspect because understanding can usually be enriched in some way. (p. 184)

According to Burdan (2004), 'This misunderstanding of reading is further complicated by a view of the literature classroom as a territory too perilous for uninitiated and inexpert readers to explore' (p. 23). Hence, students adopt the guise of observers rather than participants and read in order to find out what the poet is saying or what they think their teacher understands the poet is saying (Burdan, 2004). This seems to have a long lasting effect. Pasquin (2010) describes the surprise of a group of trainee teachers when she asked them to avoid analysing a poem. She explains that this reaction was due to the fact that 'they had struggled with the

meaning of poetry all through their high school years and now a poem presented itself as a problem to be solved, in a fashion that must please the teacher and the examiner' (Pasquin, 2010, p. 256). Acting as if trapped in a vicious circle, teachers probably forge this practice out of their own experience of poetry at school, especially if the emphasis was predominantly on literary analysis rather than enjoyment (O'Hara, 1999; Ray, 1999). By adopting the stance of gatekeepers to poetry, some teachers help to consolidate students' belief that a poem will remain inscrutable as long as a teacher is not present to help them unravel its meaning by means of a highly analytical approach.

At Junior College, poetry lessons adopt three different formats: lectures, seminars and tutorials. While seminars and tutorials should probably involve more student interaction than lectures, it is questionable whether students identify with Blocksidge's (2000) idea that 'Seminar conditions can be the norm from day one of the A-Level course and, in studying poetry, pupils can quickly grow used to the practice of questioning the poem, questioning each other and questioning me' (p. 105). If this were the case then it would mean that students are used to a style of teaching 'based on a relatively intimate, interactive discussion group' (Amigoni & Sanders, 2003, p. 75). This kind of pedagogy is highly desirable given that the opportunity to interact and work in a group leads to growth (Bensey, 1991), develops metacognition and metadiscoursal skills (Hardman & Beverton, 1993, 1995), and facilitates understanding (Yazedjian & Kolkhorst, 2007). Students working in groups achieve more than individuals working alone and the process of achieving as a part of a group transfers to individual testing situations (Gabbert, Johnson, & Johnson, 1986). In fact, it is also reported that group discussion has an impact on students' understanding of the texts they are required to read and interpret as part of a test (Fall, Webb, & Chudowsky, 2000). When group processes are of high quality all the students in a heterogeneous group of varying levels of achievement are bound to benefit (Wing-yi Cheng, Lam, & Chung-yan Chan, 2008). Such pedagogy is crucial because it values the students' voices as much as that of the teacher. Probst (2004) claims that 'If a class begins to work well, the students may accept the teacher as a participant in the same process of responding and thinking, able to contribute as another learner' (pp. 91-92). This seems fundamental given evidence suggesting that good teaching occurs when teachers see themselves as learners (Hattie, 2012; Stevens, Cliff Hodges, Gibbons, Hunt, & Turvey, 2006). When the teacher seeks to

create a democratic classroom environment in which students' opinions matter as much as those of the teacher then this will facilitate student engagement. A valid poetry teaching strategy is when the teacher 'helps them discuss their thoughts with other students, communicate ideas effectively and work productively with others' (Chambers & Gregory, 2006, p. 136). This kind of pedagogy values students' contributions and seeks to devise means by which they may flourish. It helps to foster opportunities for deep learning, which is defined as 'the process through which an individual becomes capable of taking what was learned in one situation and applying it to new situations' (Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012, p. 5). It is a necessary pedagogy considering that one of the most powerful effects on learning is when learners become their own teachers (Hattie, 2012).

2.4.1 Active Approaches

Even when teaching poetry for examinations it is still imperative 'to use as many active approaches as you can' (Dymoke, 2009, p. 94). For teachers this entails being 'conversant with the many imaginative, active strategies that can be called upon to bring poems to life for children' (Kelly & Collins, 2009, p. 29). Active approaches to the teaching of poetry encourage students to engage with poems in a variety of ways so that they are not just perceived as printed texts but appreciated for their multimodality. Burdan (2004) believes that 'It is important for students to recognize that poetry lives both on the page and in the ear, to see and hear the play of language' (p. 27). According to Snapper (2009b), 'Teachers know that, if poetry is to have an impact in the classroom, it must be to some extent demystified, and the links between the oral origins of poetry and the modern popular and literary traditions made clear' (p. 2). Unfortunately, this is not the view taken by some curricula and syllabi, e.g. MC English. Speaking about the UK context, Gordon (2004) complains that 'The inscription of poetry in the curriculum as a printed mode…may encourage a pedagogy that does not adequately recognise the potential of poetry to make meaning in a variety of modes' (p. 97). Poetry ends up being 'taught as a set of rules and procedures, with a terminology that relates to measurement of lines and stanzas, identification of elements and forms. Poems become riddles to which only the English teacher has the answer' (Sullivan, 2005, pp. 30-31). Stovall (2006) maintains that 'Despite the popularity of poetry slam and performance poetry, creative spaces for young people in schools are slowly being eliminated', partly due to the fact that

the 'visual and performing arts are not viewed as essential elements of the curriculum' (p. 79). This is detrimental to young people's engagement with poetry, especially since 'Performing a poem is one of the most enjoyable ways of finding out how it tastes, how it works, how it hangs together, how rhythm, word music, the patterning of language and sound all combine to express feelings and meanings' (Barrs & Styles, 2013, p. 193). According to Certo (2013), 'Poetry matters, for it is a form of performance that can potentially exhilarate children and develop their confidence, all the while having their literal and metaphorical voices being heard' (p. 115). The insignificance accorded to active approaches to poetry goes counter to the idea that 'teaching and learning need to be subversive – especially subversive of the strong urge towards the alienating boredom of a pre-determined curriculum with pre-determined outcomes' (Stevens, 2007, p. 65). Gregory (2008) explains that 'Workers in youth slam are often keenly aware of how unpalatable the restrictiveness of the school curriculum is to many teachers and students, and promote youth slam as a means to overcome these limitations' (pp. 74-75). This is significant given that 'Spoken word poetry workshops and slams can encourage young people to share their stories and develop their voices' (Williams, 2015, p. 82). Despite poetry's potential as a multimodal medium, some curricula still seem to associate it with print and this is a form of disservice to students' engagement with poetry. For instance, Gordon (2009) believes that 'a curricular gap in attention to aural dimensions, though overt in the early years and tacitly assumed in the upper levels of attainment, is untenable with regard to the way pupils can and do understand poetry as sound' (p. 173). Providing young people with more varied ways of approaching poetry would probably help to boost their engagement as well as create 'a rich poetry environment' (Fleming & Stevens, 2015, p. 193) in the classroom.

An assessment-oriented approach to poetry education seems to undermine the use of active approaches to poetry. However, young people 'can indeed respond sensitively to poetry, though in ways not easily acknowledged by this established discourse of poetry in schools' (Gordon, 2010, p. 40). According to Hanratty (2011), 'the educational and imaginative benefits resulting from that engagement cannot be underestimated and they can undoubtedly transcend the merely academic benefits which can be measured by examination results' (p. 424). This is why Hennessy and McNamara (2011) believe that the failure to adopt a more creative approach to poetry makes it 'vulnerable to becoming a packaged commodity' (p. 217). Active

approaches to poetry value its multimodality and underscore the fact that poetry lends itself to performance, which 'has the potential not only to celebrate form and meaning, but also to instantiate a kind of knowledge whose educational value should be given equal status with the analytical understanding of poems that currently drives the examination system' (Pullinger & Whitley, 2013, p. 172). Poetry's potential for performance seems to demand a pedagogy that encourages students to transcend the close reading of printed poems, which is commonly the only way in which they are asked to engage with poetry.

Despite the fact that active approaches to poetry teaching can do 'much to enliven the poetry lesson', it is also true that 'in the wrong context these methods could be just as alienating and bewildering for pupils as the method of inductive questioning so readily condemned' (Fleming & Stevens, 2015, p. 178). Hence, it is important to realize that 'it is a mistake to recommend practical methods of teaching poetry which may be only appropriate for particular poems or types of poems' (Fleming & Stevens, 2015, p. 182). It would be better for teachers to have access to a wide repertoire of methods and approaches that they can choose from depending on the poems they teach, their students' needs, and a lesson's objectives.

2.4.2 Multimodality

Given the potential of digital tools as a means of engaging students as well as an awareness of the possibility that in some educational contexts (such as the one at Junior College) students might not be availing themselves fully of such potential, the next few sections review the literature on a multimodal approach to poetry teaching and learning. In recent years one of the most influential approaches to the teaching and learning of poetry is that emphasising multimodality, which is increasingly renowned as an effective way of enhancing students' engagement. This is probably due to the idea that 'contemporary culture is marked by an intense pluralism and heterogeneity' and hence poetry can no longer be simply 'evaluate[d]…in terms of its formal devices' but 'an interdisciplinary outlook' is required (Gilbert, 2006, pp. 1-2). By means of a multimodal approach, teachers can enable students to enter a poem, play with the English language and transform poetry into a performance.

Multimodality is defined as 'the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which these modes are combined' (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 20). For Dressman (2010), it is 'the

crafted integration of two or more ways, or modes, of communication, so that their combined meaning as a whole is greater than either mode separately or their simple combination' (p. 71). This usually, but not exclusively, involves the use of digital technology. The use of a multimodal approach is becoming ever more necessary given that the needs of digital natives put pressure on education to change (Bennett, Maton, & Kervin, 2008).

Given the different and evolving ways of communication that contemporary students can utilise to communicate meaning and understand the world, a multimodal approach is necessary. According to the New London Group (1996), 'One of the key ideas informing the notion of multiliteracies is the increasing complexity and inter-relationship of different modes of meaning' (p. 78). What relates different design elements (i.e. linguistic, visual, audio, gestural and spatial) to each other are 'the Multimodal patterns of meaning' (New London Group, 1996, p. 65). Given that 'all meaning-making is multimodal' the latter is considered to be 'the most significant, as it relates all the other modes in quite remarkably dynamic relationships' (New London Group, 1996, pp. 80-81). The 'transformation' of texts that is allowed by digital technology means that 'as a way of reflecting on text, exploring and experimenting with it in a new medium can offer insights into and shifts of meaning that can well be characterized as refraction' (Tweddle et al., 1997, p. 54). Unsworth (2001) refers to 'technoliteracies' and in his opinion these will not supplant traditional literacies but complement them, especially since 'hard-copy forms of "linear" texts will continue to co-exist with electronic hypertext for some time' (p. 281). Hence, 'the work of the English teacher clearly involves developing students' use of multiliteracies in the composition and comprehension of texts in computer based and conventional formats' as well as 'developing students' meta-semiotic understanding and the associated meta-language' (Unsworth, 2001, p. 282). A multimodal approach presents students with

> different potentials for engagement with a text: the point of entry, the possible paths through a text and the potentials for re-making it. In multimodal texts, each mode offers a different way into representation and focuses on different aspects of meaning (Jewitt, 2005, p. 7).

In Alvermann's (2009) opinion, 'reaching and teaching adolescents in currently changing times will require a healthy respect for their past, present, and future

literacies' (p. 105). This issue is particularly significant given the fact that some contemporary English syllabi (e.g. MC English) do not yet make any reference to multimodal texts or to any conjunctive literacies.

2.4.3 Multimodal Teaching and Learning

The notion of multimodality redefines pedagogy because learning itself is reconceptualised, partly because of the impact of new technologies. For example, Kress (2003) argues that 'the increasingly and insistently more multimodal forms of contemporary texts make it essential to rethink our notions of what reading is' (p. 141). This is partly because 'the demands on readers, and the demands of reading, will if anything be greater, and they will certainly be different' (Kress, 2003, p. 167). In the USA, the NCTE (2005, 2008) indicates that the definition of literacy for twenty-first century classrooms goes beyond the traditional ability to read and write print texts but also incorporates the sense of reading and writing multimodal texts.

McBride (2004) feels that those who teach the humanities need to 'reconceptualise the intersections between the humanities classroom and visual rhetoric' (p. xix). This is important because just like language and literature, 'film is a signifying practice through which students make meaning'; its use in the classroom leads to 'active and engaged viewers who must participate in the viewing experience in order to create meaning' (McBride, 2004, p. xiii). According to Jewitt (2005), 'The multimodal character of new technologies requires a re-thinking of learning as a linguistic accomplishment' (p. 8). In her opinion, 'The almost habitual conjunction of "language", speech and writing, with learning is…especially paradoxical in relation to technology-mediated learning' given that speech and writing are 'a small part of a multimodal ensemble' (Jewitt, 2005, p. 2). For Kress et al. (2005), 'A multimodal approach is one where attention is given to all the culturally shaped resources that are available' (p. 2). They consider it 'essential' due to 'the ways in which it creates new kinds of identity for students and teachers' (Kress et al., 2005, p. 14). It may actually lead to a reevaluation of the teacher/learner hierarchy: 'changing learners in changing times may eventually alter how we, as teachers and teacher educators, view the expert/novice relationship' (Alvermann, 2009, p. 102). A multimodal approach promotes the formation of a learning community in the classroom whereby teachers and students forge learning partnerships so that new knowledge is generated and connected to the world by means of digital tools and resources (Fullan &

Langworthy, 2014). This is particularly significant when one takes into consideration the traditional role of poetry teachers as gatekeepers to a poem's meaning.

2.4.4 A Multimodal Approach to Poetry Teaching

A multimodal poetry teaching methodology is seen as having the potential to be effective in boosting students' engagement. Dymoke and Hughes (2009) are convinced of 'the powerful, dynamic and multimodal nature of poetry which is…a key justification for its inclusion in a 21st-century curriculum' (p. 93). They remind us of the fact that the word *text* originates from the Latin verb *texere*, meaning to weave, and highlight the example of 'a digital space' within which 'a multimodal text can be woven by many makers who are also users/readers of that text' (Dymoke & Hughes, 2009, p. 93). Hughes (2009) thinks that 'we have suppressed poetry's multimodal nature too long within the confines of the print text… Students are immersed daily in new media, the cultural tools of their time, and we must redefine our literacy practices in order to stay relevant' (p. 230). According to Blake (2009), a multimodal approach helps teachers to 'develop an engaged enjoyment and appreciation of poetry' as well as 'creative and critical thinking' (p. 28) during their lessons. Dymoke (2009) argues that 'poetry is a playful, multimodal medium rather than one destined to be stranded for ever on the printed page' and she urges teachers to do their utmost to keep it so:

> If you leave poetry on the page in your classroom you will be in danger
> of sounding its death knell: it is an organic, enriching communication
> tool, which taps into all our senses and is constantly renewing and
> reinventing itself to afford us new ways to express ourselves… If poetry
> is to flourish in any future English curriculum and in your classroom and
> if you are to flourish as a creative poetry teacher, then you should
> embrace the multimodal experiences poetry can offer. (pp. 80-81)

Snapper (2009b) agrees with this and claims that 'Teachers also know that poetry can be "brought to life" for students by translating it from the printed page to other media' (p. 2). The benefits of this seem to be clearly evident in the classroom as attested by an Ofsted (2009) report that describes how amongst a number of lessons deemed 'fun' by students, one particular poetry lesson was observed to make use of 'a range of media to stimulate imagination' (p. 12). This approach was 'particularly suited to a class where English was not most students' first language' (Ofsted, 2009,

p. 12), a characteristic of the Maltese learning context. Multimodality seems to be a key priority for all those teachers hoping to engage digital natives with the reading of poetry. As Hughes (2009) points out, 'Immersing students in a digital environment that serves as a model for their own digital performances views performance as a purposeful and creative process interwoven with other literacy events' (p. 228). Multimodality allows teachers to harness poetry's communicative potential (Xerri, 2012c). However, despite all the advantages of a multimodal approach, teachers are still the most significant factor when it comes to inspiring students' reading habits. Digital technology has the potential to make the learning experience a more engaging one and to lift a poem off the printed page but, as a number of systematic reviews suggest (Locke & Andrews, 2004; Low & Beverton, 2004; Torgerson & Zhu, 2003), it is certainly not the panacea for all the challenges that teachers face when attempting to engage students with poetry. Moreover, there is no evidence to suggest that non-ICT methods of instruction are inferior to those employing digital technology, despite the fact that the latter can be highly motivating for learners (Andrews, 2004).

2.4.5 Creative and Personal Responses

Effective poetry pedagogy seems to place students at the centre of the learning process by giving primacy to their creative and personal responses. This is in line with Stevens and McGuinn's idea (2004) that 'Perhaps the cardinal rule of effective, adventurous English teaching is to recognise, develop and celebrate what is already there in the classroom' (p. 6). They maintain that 'A great part of the skill of teaching English lies in fostering the appropriate culture of the classroom to give credibility to students' insights and experiences, and in making creative connections with and between them' (Stevens & McGuinn, 2004, pp. 10-11). In a learner-centred educational process teachers use their 'greater wisdom and experience in opening new awareness and deepening understanding, without destroying personal and felt responses' (Stratta et al., 1973, p. 42). Their role 'is to facilitate, stimulate and support in activities where learners investigate, explore and interpret literary texts' (Carter & Long, 1987, p. 5). Students 'build up meaning by interacting with the text and then with each other' (Carter & Long, 1987, p. 9). Maley and Moulding (1985) suggest that students should initially be asked to formulate an individual response and then develop this by means of pair and group work while 'The teacher

throughout has a watching brief rather than a leading role' (p. 139). This ensures that students are provided with 'a more creative role' (Dias & Hayhoe, 1988, p. 35) and with 'opportunities to develop their personal responses, rather than being spoon-fed an answer' (Dymoke, 2009, p. 94). Dias and Hayhoe (1988) suggest a procedure to the reading of poetry in the classroom by means of which 'each pupil has the opportunity to confirm and develop his or her experience of the poem in a collaborative sharing of responses within a small group' (p. 48). The teacher's role is not that of unravelling the poem's riddle but that of an 'active and interested listener' who assists students to 'make sense of the poem for themselves' (Dias & Hayhoe, 1988, p. 48). By providing students with more autonomy, an effective engagement with poetry ensues. Such an approach enables the student to be 'transformed from a spectator into a participant' (Maley & Duff, 1989, p. 9). Moreover, poetry is 'demystified through a "hands-on" approach' (Maley & Duff, 1989, p. 7). One of the possible effects of an assessment-driven pedagogy is that the cultivation of students' creative and personal responses to poetry might be given little value.

A pedagogy that devalues creative and personal responses focuses instead on engendering a set response to poetry. Traditionally, 'schools seem to indoctrinate students into a pattern of response' (Purves, 1973, p. 315). In fact, Stevens (2007) points out that 'a huge amount of poetry is taught in schools, but not always with enough imaginative awareness of its possibilities (and inherent tensions) for creative exploration' (p. 55). Cumming (2007) concurs with this and maintains that 'though poetry is positively included, there is little attention and value afforded to children's creativity with language' (p. 99). The effect of not adequately capitalizing on children's creativity in poetry lessons is that it may fail to be nurtured: 'if there is no opportunity to link a child's love of playing with language with what they are expected to learn about poetry in class, then that which they have could become irrelevant and devalued in school' (Cumming, 2007, p. 99). This might occur if teachers do not acknowledge the significance of students' creative and personal responses to poetry. Dias and Hayhoe (1988) point out that 'For many teachers, the act of transferring responsibility to their pupils for the meanings they make causes great moral unease and is seen as thin disguise for abdicating responsibility for what their pupils learn' (p. 7). This is especially pertinent in light of Arnold's (1908) belief that poetry should serve as a form of moral education for young people. The view that teachers have a responsibility to teach morals to young people is also one

espoused by some contemporary writers on education (e.g. Arthur, 2011). According to Scott (1989), teachers 'believe that the student's individual response is fallible and untrustworthy and can only be properly trained by regular contact with a widely experienced and well-informed reader such as themselves' (p. 16). By not providing students with the opportunity to foreground their creative and personal responses to poetry, teachers maximise their authority as gatekeepers, increase students' sense of dependency, and limit the multiple readings that a text makes possible.

Another possible cause for the lack of importance given to creative and personal responses is that the poetry curriculum might be prescriptive in nature and not developed in consultation with teachers. In fact, Doug (2011), speaking about the UK context, maintains that 'whereas at one time teachers had control of their own teaching, suddenly the National Curriculum disempowered the teacher because the English poetry syllabus started to become rather generic and formulaic—a view that one size fits all' (p. 441). One of the results of this is that 'while the aims of the national curriculum state clearly that pupils' subjective responses to poetry should play a key role in the development of critical analysis and reflection skills within the poetry class…in practice this appears limited' (Hennessy & Mannix McNamara, 2011, p. 217). A prescriptive curriculum disenfranchises teachers and restricts poetry teaching in such a manner that young people's creative and personal responses might not be adequately fostered. Hence, Lambirth, Smith and Steele (2012) believe in 'the importance of opening up the school day to poetry in ways that the present trend for the encapsulation of poetry teaching in units of work does not allow' (p. 79). Stevens and McGuinn (2004) affirm that 'teaching for creativity is quite a tall order, requiring the courage of conviction, yet is within the pedagogical potential of the classroom teacher' (p. 39). Nonetheless, while some teachers might manage to circumvent the restrictions of a prescriptive curriculum in their teaching of poetry, for the majority the challenge to engender creativity while meeting the demands of assessment-driven educational policy is probably far too great.

2.5 Critical Lenses

The 1980-1981 Colin MacCabe affair[6] demonstrated a lack of consensus on the way literature should be taught and it foregrounded new trends in literary studies. Over the past few decades 'attention to literature and literary discourse as such has been supplanted as a defining characteristic of the literary disciplines' by theory, which 'proposes less a knowledge of the field of literature than a way of becoming self-conscious about how we use language and language uses us' (Paulson, 2001, p. 6). This burgeoning tendency is criticised by Edmundson (2004) who feels that the humanities have become dominated by 'work that is best described as out-and-out rewriting of the authors at hand. In fact, we might call these efforts not so much criticism as transformation' (p. 38). He criticises those literature lessons during which 'The student is taught not to be open to the influence of great works, but rather to perform facile and empty acts of usurpation, in which he assumes unearned power over the text' (Edmundson, 2004, p. 45). Eco (2002/2004) calls this 'a dangerous critical heresy, typical of our time, according to which we can do anything we like with a work of literature' (p. 4). However, Culler (1988) is much more cautious about debunking theory and states that 'Criticism goes with crisis, itself generates a rhetoric of crisis, insofar as it calls one to rethink the canon and to reflect on the order of a culture's discourses and the relations among them' (p. 53). The debate on whether literary theory has a place within undergraduate courses in English seems to have fizzled out as theory has now become institutionalised. However, it is still a subject of dissension when it comes to post-secondary education.

In Malta the issue of whether literary theory should feature in the MC English course was given further prominence with the publication of the 2013 syllabus. This document explicitly states that

> Reference to literary critics and theorists does not make up part of the assessment criteria at Advanced Level... However, the examiners may choose to award evidence of broader reading within an author's work or across critique of that author, and/or reference to critics and theorists if these are discerningly and appropriately (rather than tokenistically) used. (MATSEC, 2010, p. 8)

---

[6] MacCabe was denied tenure by the University of Cambridge, apparently because of a dispute within the Department of English between those who believed that literature consists of permanent moral values and those who embraced structuralism (Lewis, 1982).

For some teachers this might have proved to be somewhat confounding as on the one hand the syllabus maintains that knowledge of literary theory is not part of the assessment criteria while on the other hand it also says that careful references to literary theory might encourage examiners to award a candidate a higher grade. Despite the reassurance that literary theory is not an assessable area, some teachers might have felt that in order for them to encourage students to go the extra mile they needed to make it a staple part of their lessons.

2.5.1 Undermining the Dominant Paradigm

From its inception A-level English Literature in the UK 'was criticised by both school and university teachers for its narrow focus on the close reading of a small number of traditional canonical set texts informed by an essentially Leavisite paradigm' (Snapper, 2007, p. 17). A similar situation exists in Malta where the teaching of poetry at A-level has for many decades been heavily influenced by the traditional close reading of a text. Burton (1989) argues that I. A. Richards's conception of close reading resulted in 'a textual authoritarianism under which generations of school-children have been dragooned into believing that there can only be one response to a text' (p. 3). The teacher has the privilege of deciphering the poem and exposing the totality that resides beneath its constituent parts. This leads some students to 'feel uneasy when confronted by a poem' (Murray, 1989, p. 4) because they are told that as inexperienced readers they will be unable to fathom its totality. However, Murray (1989) attacks this misconception and argues that a poem does not possess 'a fixed anchor-point or centre from which the text gains its unity, but instead an endless deferral of that finding of centre' (p. 9). This encourages the reader to engage in a 'multiplicity of meanings, of incomplete and constantly revised interpretations' (Collingborn, 1989, p. 10), a view of reading that has apparently not yet fully taken root in the post-secondary teaching of English.

By conceiving meaning as being embedded in the text waiting to be discovered and the function of the reader as being that of establishing what the poem means, New Criticism has provided the teacher with the role of 'model and expert mediator between text and reader' and this is 'more a deterrent to readers' achieving an autonomy as readers than it is a help' (Dias & Hayhoe, 1988, p. 6). This practice is criticised because it 'dictates that a teacher's role is to *conduct* the reading of a poem, and hope somehow that his or her reading will be appropriated by pupils'

(Dias & Hayhoe, 1988, p. 7). The teacher's questions during such an activity are not really exploring students' responses because the answers are already known. Out of a sense of helplessness, 'pupils regard the teacher as possessing the key to unlock the door of the meaning of the poem; they cannot determine it themselves' (Naylor & Wood, 2012, p. 13). Even though New Criticism has a strong bearing on the way poetry is taught in schools and assessed in examinations, post-structuralism 'may affect classroom practice in ways that are more consonant with ways young people actually read literature' (Dias & Hayhoe, 1988, p. 11). This is because it sees meaning as being 'indeterminate and unstable' and hence 'a poem cannot mean on its own or as part of a system, but is dependent on several choices on the part of its readers' (Dias & Hayhoe, 1988, p. 14). The popularity of the Leavisite paradigm in A-level English classes might indicate that for some teachers the notion of multiple readings is too perilous for it to be adopted as part of their poetry pedagogy.

Carter and Long (1991) point out that 'A pedagogical disadvantage' associated with traditional practical criticism 'is that there is no clear *method*' to it and that its teaching methods are 'tightly controlled by the teacher, either in the form of directed questions accompanied by teacher-led commentary, or in the form of a demonstration exposition in a lecture or seminar' (p. 181). Students are not explicitly taught a number of procedures that they can 'implement for themselves' and hence they pick these up 'at second hand' (Carter & Long, 1991, p. 181) from their teachers or books. According to Exton (1984), the 'firm separation of creation from criticism, of practice from theory' is one of the handicaps affecting the teaching of poetry and that is why what is needed are approaches that being informed by theory 'are designed to give children confidence and recognise their creative power when they read and negotiate with poems' (pp. 70-71). What is imperative is that 'these approaches need to feed from and into the personal experience of students and awake their active engagement with texts' (Carter & Long, 1991, p. 195). Whether a teacher-centred approach to the teaching of poetry can foster student engagement is highly questionable and yet this still seems to be a very popular pedagogical approach in post-secondary classes.

The emergence of literary theory was meant to lead to a rethinking of the way poetry is taught at A-level. However, theory seems to have had little impact on the teaching of English at pre-university level. In fact, Peim (2009) posits that in the UK 'the National Curriculum in English is entirely unaware of these various discourses

and their impact. Contemporary English teaching in schools remains structured around a normative model of language and advances a relatively narrow concept of textual literacy' (p. 154). This situation is also apparent in Malta. One of the factors for which literary theory is not more prevalent in A-level English courses seems to be teachers' own reluctance to adopt a poetry teaching pedagogy informed by different critical lenses.

2.5.2 Teachers' Scepticism

One of the reasons for which literary theory does not seem to be so popular in A-level classes is that teachers themselves are sceptical about whether it has a place within the teaching of English at this level. However, Eaglestone (2001) affirms that theory is not to be underestimated at A-level because ultimately 'it is a discipline that, through the study of literature, attempts to comprehend better the world around us and to appreciate the others that inhabit it' (p. 6). Those teachers who object to theory's place in the A-level English classroom are 'object[ing] to the changing intellectual and social climate of the world', and Eaglestone (2001) is not convinced that A-level students are willing to do that: 'They ask the big questions of literary texts because they really care about what they mean' (p. 7). Appleman (2015) is aware that 'Teachers…may not be convinced of the relevance of contemporary literary theory. High school literature teachers often feel distant and detached' (p. 4) from it. Calway (2009) agrees with this idea and maintains that most A-level teachers object to critical theory because they complain about the fact that they and their students have 'enough to worry about reading the texts themselves let alone peering through a range of ingenious critical binoculars interposed between them and the texts' (p. 55). However, he argues that even the avoidance of theory 'is itself a reading theory…that acts more like prejudice than insight' (Calway, 2009, p. 55). Teachers should perceive literary theory as 'an enriching and informing route to one's own reading', especially because it 'offer[s] a modern way of reading that students enjoy' (Calway, 2009, p. 55). In fact, Bellis, Parr and Doecke (2009) point out that those who attack literary theory's place in the curriculum by saying that it goes counter to reading for personal pleasure fail to understand the complexities of textual engagement as it happens in a lesson and in so doing 'deny students both the pleasures of engaging with the imaginative world of texts and the opportunities to reflect on those pleasures in ways that enhance their sense of themselves as readers'

(p. 172). Teachers' reluctance to adopt literary theory as part of their poetry lessons seems to be one of the reasons for which students are being deprived of an approach that has the potential to enrich their reading experience.

2.5.3 Alternative Perspectives

Encouraging A-level English students to engage with poetry via the use of literary theory is considered to be a means of enhancing their reading experience. Exton (1984) believes that reading activities informed by literary theory allow students 'to understand precisely *how* and therefore *what* a text says, and how we make those meanings'; this needs to happen 'before moving on to make statements about "life" outside the poem' (p. 74). Such activities provide students with 'the tools to analyse the world around them…and to make their own decisions' (Exton, 1984, p. 78). Some teachers consider poetry as being a problematic subject due to the difficulty of showing students how it works but this may change if they come to see 'creativity and criticism' as being 'mutually supportive and illuminating' (Exton, 1984, p. 76). It is partly for such reasons that Peim (1989) considers 'a practice of English based on innocence, uncontaminated by theory' (p. 26) as being no longer viable.

Burton (1989) postulates that literary theory is 'a very useful base from which to devise English teaching which opens more texts than it closes' (p. 6). Certain teachers find that when they use theory in their lessons this is

> far more enriching and creative than a didactic approach, largely because the text is opened up in so many different ways and allows pupils a variety of viewing points from which to consider and respond to the issues it raises. (Twist, 1989, p. 30)

Collingborn (1989) feels that those methods that engage the student in 'simultaneous involvement and distancing' from the text are 'a more honest, open and accessible approach for the majority of pupils than the traditional literary criticism' (p. 9). The latter is criticised for endorsing only a limited number of responses that are perceived as being timeless and universal. In Collingborn's (1989) opinion 'Encouraging pupils to see themselves as questioners of and commentators upon the book can also serve to make them more critical as readers, and more aware of themselves as interpreters and shapers of the meaning of the text' (p. 9). Mitchell (1993) agrees with this idea and argues that 'awareness of possible responses and types of engagement

should…be integrated into a practice which is rigorously and fundamentally reflexive, questioning and on-going' (p. 27). Furniss and Bath (2007) maintain that it is important for students to be aware of their assumptions in relation to the nature of poetry since these inform their reading of poems. There is no such thing as an innocent reader and this is because 'our assumptions about poetry are shaped by our own particular place in history, and by the unconscious theories about literature which our particular culture holds and disseminates' (Furniss & Bath, 2007, p. 26). Students should therefore be encouraged 'to think about poetry in theoretically informed ways' since this will allow them 'to be attentive to the theoretical implications of the features of each particular poem' (Furniss & Bath, 2007, p. 26).

Theory at A-level 'should be embraced, not kept behind the scenes' because it offers 'a reflection on literature as it forms, interacts with and mirrors the world we all share' (Eaglestone, 2001, p. 7). Wyse and Jones (2002) claim that 'given the encouragement to develop interest in texts and diverse ways to reflect upon them, literary theory offers scope for greater understanding' (p. 78). Rather than teaching a literary text by focusing on theme, characterization etc. and using literature teaching as a means of developing solely students' reading and writing skills, 'the literature curriculum could focus on constructing a certain critical disposition in students where the intellectual stress of the subject would fall on the politics of representation' (Poon, 2007, p. 57). This can be achieved because 'Literary theories provide lenses that can sharpen one's vision and provide alternative ways of seeing' (Appleman, 2015, p. 4). For Eaglestone (2009), the act of 'questioning and reading from different perspectives is central to doing English and to the enjoyment of reading' (p. 25). Nightingale (2011) asserts that 'a more central role for theory, from the outset, would make an A-Level course more than a series of isolated texts; and provide a critical framework that took students beyond their personal response' (p. 158). Seemingly concurring with this idea, Tuchaai, O'Neil and Sharplin (2012) argue that 'Exposure to theories of reading offers students different ways of reading texts to construct meaning' (p. 163), in turn facilitating the development of higher order critical thinking skills. The benefits of employing a poetry pedagogy informed by literary theory seem to be quite compelling and those teachers who fail to actually adopt such an approach are probably not aware that their students are being shortchanged,

especially since some of them will be expected to engage with poetry through literary theory immediately after post-secondary education.[7]

2.5.4 Bridging the Gap

Eaglestone (1999) argues that 'Students going on to higher education find their A level poor preparation for a degree' because while literary theory is a staple part of English undergraduate degrees 'sixth-form teaching still rests on more traditional analysis of themes, plot, character and style'. McEvoy (1999) concurs by saying that 'In no other A level subject are the ideas of 40 years ago, ideas which have been long abandoned in the universities, still taught'. Theory has not sufficiently influenced the A-level study of English and 'forms one of the largest gaps' (McEvoy, 1999) between post-secondary and undergraduate study. Even though an A-level English course should not 'simply be exclusively a training for a degree', it is 'very far from matching – in an appropriate way the shape of the discipline in HE' (Eaglestone, 2001, p. 6). Ballinger (2003) reports that her first-year undergraduate students 'often felt bewildered by literary theory and were unsure about how to use criticism saliently in their assessed essays' (p. 100). Without considering the fact that not all students go on to study English at undergraduate level, she affirms that literary theory should preferably be introduced in the second year of an A-level course in order 'to help ease the transition to university' (Ballinger, 2003, p. 104). Atherton (2004) makes a case for the teaching of literary theory to A-level students since this will 'acknowledge that our subject does possess a set of specialist skills and a body of specialist knowledge – factors which enable the student of English to be distinguished from the lay reader' (p. 33). It will also help 'close the gap between A Level and higher education, introducing students to the theoretical ideas that inform the study of English at degree level' (Atherton, 2004, p. 31). Nightingale (2007) argues that, in terms of A-level students' preparation for undergraduate studies in English, 'the problem is one of insufficient specialisation insofar as this means an evolving acquaintance with the body of knowledge (i.e. critical and theoretical work) that will constitute the subject in HE' (p. 138). Snapper (2009a) found that first-year university students of English tended to struggle with literary theory because 'At A Level, they had been given little opportunity to move beyond a conventional form of

---

[7] Only around 11% of students choose to continue studying English at undergraduate level (Xerri, 2009).

textual "appreciation" towards a broader and more conceptual grasp of the nature of literature and literary study and response' (p. 207). Nonetheless, as undergraduates 'their familiarity with such concepts and frameworks was assumed to such an extent that they were effectively still hindered from a genuine engagement with them' (Snapper, 2009a, p. 207). Eaglestone (2009) maintains that literary theory is necessary at A-level because 'the world we live in now is not the same world that the Leavises and others who shaped the subject lived in' (p. 17). Students are not yet being fully encouraged to embrace the idea that 'every way of reading brings with it presuppositions' and that 'there simply cannot be one correct way of reading' (Eaglestone, 2009, p. 22). The gap between post-secondary and undergraduate study of English is detrimental to students and can probably be traced to a reluctance on the part of teachers and curriculum developers to merge the ways in which students engage with poetry at these two levels.

2.6 Creativity in the Classroom

At the IATEFL 2013 Conference, the Liverpool poet Roger McGough introduced two of his poems by briefly talking about children's conception of language. Before reading 'The Way Things Are' he confessed, 'I've always rather believed that all children are poets before they go to school…language is all very fresh to them' (McGough, 2013). For McGough (2013), this kind of fresh perception of language is gradually eroded as children grow older and that is why his poem serves as a reflection 'about how we want to educate our children.' 'On and On' builds on this idea and is meant to encourage the reader to contemplate 'the way children see language' and contrast it with how the older they get 'cliché folds into cliché' (McGough, 2013). By means of these poems, McGough (2013) challenged an international audience of around 2,000 English teachers to consider how their stance as educators influences students' learning experience. In a way his thoughts and poems invited the audience to re-evaluate their pedagogical approach and to reflect on whether it was adequately creative.

Creativity is increasingly being espoused as a pillar upon which to construct young people's education. However, the act of nurturing their creativity is sometimes perceived as inordinately challenging. Franken (2006) defines creativity 'as the tendency to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others, and entertaining ourselves

and others' (p. 396). He considers it imperative for anyone wanting to be creative 'to be able to view things in new ways or from a different perspective. Among other things, you need to be able to generate new possibilities or new alternatives' (Franken, 2006, p. 394). Creativity is perhaps one of the most exciting concepts that currently inform education. There seems to be a tacit agreement that nurturing students' creativity in the classroom is important because by doing so their learning experience will be more highly rewarding. This seems to be accompanied by the belief that a student-centred classroom environment necessarily involves the cultivation of creative practices. In fact, 'Creativity is recognized as sometimes being a powerful motivating force for teachers and learners, and it can be a vehicle for high levels of individualized achievement' (Davies, 2006, pp. 52-53). Creativity in a lesson does not just entail students having fun by using their imagination. As Robinson (2011) points out, 'creativity is also about working in a highly focused way on ideas and projects, crafting them into their best forms and making critical judgements along the way about which work best and why' (p. 5). This suggests that the development of creativity should not be seen as a distraction from exam-oriented classroom activities but as a counterbalancing force that probably has an even bigger potential to stimulate student achievement.

Despite being widely conceived of as a positive value, the presence of creativity in the classroom is hindered by a number of opposing factors, the most powerful perhaps being curricular and assessment pressures. According to Hall and Thomson (2005), 'Standardised teaching, ruled by standardized outcome measures, and lessons parcelled into 10 and 20 minute blocks are unlikely to be the optimal conditions for promoting creativity in school' (p. 15). Dourneen (2010) is in full agreement with this idea and explains that 'The curriculum has been crowded with so much content that it is a challenge to plan lessons which enable pupils to be creative, to explore their own ideas and to be personally engaged' (p. 61). Even though all the beginning teachers interviewed by Dymoke (2009) 'thought poetry could be taught creatively' a few of them 'considered that their placement schools did not exemplify creative practices but focused on device spotting in poetry lessons' (p. 82). An assessment-driven curriculum that expects a standardised form of pedagogy on the part of English teachers risks pushing out creativity.

Franken's (2006) definition of creativity is scuppered by the tendency to view education as a producer of minds consistent with the predetermined needs of society

(Xerri, 2015b). Consequently, teachers are the purveyors of those knowledge bases and skills that society prioritises above everything else. Such a mechanical approach to education blights the possibility to cultivate creative minds capable of lateral thinking and fresh possibilities. It is also short-sighted as one can never predict what qualities, knowledge and skills will be needed in the future. It is probably for this reason that a number of teachers concur with the idea that 'the peripheral place afforded to the development of pupils' creative and affective sensibilities within the class is deeply disconcerting' (Hennessy & Mannix McNamara, 2011, p. 218). Curing education of such a lack of imaginativeness requires the courage to transcend conventional practices on the part of the educational system and its rank and file. The success of initiatives like the Red Room Company, the Sydney Story Factory, 826 Valencia and other creative organisations for young people relies on bold experimentation with non-conventional approaches to education (Xerri, in press-a). However, the results of such innovation need to be taken into consideration by policymakers and curriculum developers when reforming the educational system. Such reform is fundamental in order to restrain the system's obsession with standardised testing and to spotlight the significance of creativity. Wyn (2009) declares that 'Until there is greater "ownership" of non-mainstream programs that address more creative ways of learning, the gains made by small, responsive and relevant locally based educational innovations will remain invisible and therefore undervalued' (p. 51). The adoption of such innovations by mainstream schooling is imperative so that as many young people as possible benefit from a creative education.

Despite the fact that teachers might be concerned about the effects of external forces on creative practices in the classroom, it also true that they need to see themselves as agents of change and adopt a stance that is more conducive to the development of such practices. As Holbrook (1964) suggests, if teachers respond to creativity they will be able to cherish creativity in students (p. 122). Most importantly, those responsible for the development of young people's creativity in the classroom must think and act creatively. This is especially significant given the fact that some of the obstacles to creativity in the classroom are constituted by certain attitudes, beliefs and practices adopted by a number of educators. For example, a study by Scott (1999) shows that teachers are prone to see creative children as being more disruptive. Associating creativity with disruption obviously means that teachers

are wary of cultivating students' creativity. While there is a difference between teaching creatively and teaching for creativity, the two are also closely related (Craft, 2005; Stevens & McGuinn, 2004). In order for creativity to flourish in the classroom 'the role of the teacher as creative practitioner – modelling the qualities sought in the learner – is fundamental' (Stevens & McGuinn, 2004, p. 38). Such a 'creative teacher seeks ways of inventing, adapting, extending and completing tasks in new or exciting ways' (Stevens & McGuinn, 2004, p. 39). According to Robinson and Aronica (2015), 'Cultivating creativity is one of the most interesting challenges for any teacher. It involves understanding the real dynamics of creative work.' Even though promoting creativity might seem exceedingly difficult for ordinary classroom teachers tasked with catering for the needs of a group of students and constantly preoccupied with the demands of assessment, the most important lesson that they need to take to heart is that in order to instigate creativity on the part of their students they need to position themselves creatively first (Xerri, 2013d, 2014b, 2015b). For this to happen it might be necessary to provide teachers with adequate support. Ewing (2010) points out that a 'paucity in pre-service training is compounded by the widespread lack of sufficient or appropriate in-service teacher professional learning in the Arts' (p. 35). By encouraging teachers to deconstruct their attitudes, beliefs and practices there is a better chance of allowing creativity to prosper in their poetry lessons.

2.7 Creativity in Teacher Education and Development

If there is agreement on the value of cultivating creativity in the classroom then the necessary means of facilitating this must be identified. Hope (2010) maintains that 'If we want to develop creative potential in schools, we must want the necessary structures and means for its development as much as we want the results. A number of major adjustments are required' (p. 39). Perhaps one of the most fundamental adjustments that need to be made is for teachers to position themselves as creative practitioners, doing so by being provided with plenty of support. The need for this is indicated by research (Benton, 1984; Dymoke, 2003) that highlights the insufficient amount of training that teachers are provided with when it comes to poetry pedagogy. In fact, Dymoke's (2003) interviews with teachers show that training on poetry teaching had 'occurred in a haphazard way. None had experienced any systematic poetry training which could have focused in on gaps in subject knowledge or enabled

them to reinforce/refine their skills' (p. 10). One potential gap in poetry teachers' competences is creativity.

One means of developing teachers' creativity is to target the relevant knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs in teacher education programmes. In fact, in order for trainee teachers to become creative practitioners, 'They need a secure pedagogical understanding and strong subject knowledge, supported by a passionate belief in the potential of creative teaching to engage and inspire hearts and minds' (Grainger, Barnes, & Scoffham, 2004, pp. 251-252). According to Stafford (2010), 'Valuable though it is for student teachers to be given exciting ideas for the classroom, true creativity will only be achieved when they are empowered to think for themselves and generate their own innovations' (p. 42). An example of this might consist of trainees taking the risk to adopt the guise of creative writers (Dymoke, 2011). The value of poetry writing activities for pre-service teachers is substantial since they have the potential to equip them with the necessary creative disposition before embarking on their career. Encouraging prospective teachers to engage in such creative activities might help them to discover their own latent creativity and thus assume the stance of teachers who are willing to teach poetry in a creative fashion.

The act of enabling teachers to become creative practitioners might involve re-evaluating the objectives of current teacher education programmes and supporting teacher educators to design and develop creative curricula so that trainees would be able to reap the benefits (Donnelly, 2004). This is imperative given that 'the competence model of teacher education…is the equivalent for beginning teachers of the transmission model of learning (filling the bucket, essentially) they are in practice often encouraged to adopt for their classes' (Stevens, 2010, p. 194). For Cliff Hodges (2005), 'Teacher education…has a major role to play in engendering creativity in the classroom so it is necessary to examine the extent to which trainees are offered opportunities to participate in creative approaches when learning to teach' (p. 58). In fact, Stafford (2010) claims that 'Encouraging and facilitating critical and creative thinking by our student teachers defies "quick fix" solutions, and indeed requires tutors to engage in some creative and collaborative thinking of their own' (p. 41). It is clear that just expecting teachers to teach poetry creatively is not sufficient unless the programmes that roll them out are themselves an embodiment of creative teaching methods.

2.8 Poetry Writing

If the teaching and learning of poetry are to be more creative then perhaps creative poetry writing should be considered an essential aspect of students' poetry education. The MC English syllabus makes no reference to poetry writing while the examination only expects students to write about poetry rather than to write poetry as well. Despite its absence from the syllabus and examination, teachers' and students' attitudes and beliefs in relation to poetry writing play an important role in determining whether this features in the MC English course. Hence, it is significant to review the literature on the benefits of poetry writing, the challenges to its implementation in a course of study, and the means of facilitating this.

In 1963, the literary critic and literary theorist Northrop Frye famously declared that 'Poetry is always the central powerhouse of a literary education' (p. 26). By means of this statement Frye (1963) is advocating a belief in the centrality of poetry to any student's engagement with literary culture. Nevertheless, it is highly debateable whether in A-level English classrooms such engagement involves more than just the critical reading of poetry for the purpose of essay writing in examinations. Seemingly indicative of this long-standing situation, in another early publication Tunnicliffe (1984) claims that nothing 'exonerates the English teacher believing in the centrality of poetry from work on poetry writing as part of the normal curriculum' (p. 163). This view is shared by Cox (1991) who argues that besides being asked to write literary essays students should also be given the opportunity of trying their hand at writing other genres, such as poetry. According to Burkhardt (2006), this is necessary because 'Every student is a poet and has ideas she or he wants to communicate in verse' (p. 72). However, Wilson (2009) shows that in a number of countries 'The status of poetry writing within the curriculum can be described as secure but mixed' (p. 388). In the UK, for example, despite the popularity of creative writing courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, it was only from September 2013 that the subject was offered at A-level. Only two years later the Department for Education (2015) announced that, due to government changes to A-levels, creative writing 'will not be developed further' (p. 11).[8] This mixed status might partly be a result of the fact that for teachers and curriculum

---

[8] This decision was prompted by the idea that creative writing is based on skills rather than knowledge (Reisz, 2015). It drew criticism from a number of educational associations, including NAWE and NATE.

developers poetry writing is a problematic area, especially due to the perceived difficulty of assessing such nontechnical writing.

In Malta, where English is the L2 for the vast majority of A-level students, poetry writing does not even enjoy such a mixed status. Similar to the US situation described by Schillinger, Meyer and Vinz (2010), poetry lessons in Malta do not feature any poetry writing and students are only encouraged to write about poetry in the traditional examination essay format. Malta's National Cultural Policy (PSTEC, 2011) was meant to address such a lacuna, however, creative writing ended up being the preserve of undergraduate students and it has not yet been introduced at lower levels. The National Curriculum Framework (MEE, 2012) indicates that children's ability to engage in 'creative expression' (p. 33) is desirable but it makes no reference to poetry writing per se. Since creative writing does not feature in the MC English syllabus, the only opportunity that students have of writing anything that could be considered a product of their own creativity and imagination is in the form of the narrative essays that they are assigned as preparation for their examination. However, the emphasis is mostly placed on the literary essays about the set and unseen texts that they study. This serves to perpetuate the examination culture that Dymoke (2001) blames for stifling creativity and 'deadeningly' (p. 39) associating poetry solely with the kind of text type that is considered acceptable for examination purposes. However, the idea that the writing of literary essays can only be mastered by means of the writing of such essays is questioned by Rijlaarsdam and Van den Bergh (2004), who are aware of students' ability to transfer and adjust what they learn in one particular situation to a different one. Poetry writing is one way of enabling students to master skills that they can transfer to their reading of and writing about poetry. Nevertheless, pre- and in-service teachers in Malta do not receive professional training in the teaching of poetry writing and hence any classroom initiatives on their part are not adequately supported. When these factors are compounded with negative attitudes and beliefs in relation to the value of poetry writing, the latter's current exclusion from A-level English classrooms will not be easily revoked.

2.8.1 Benefits of Poetry Writing

Those who believe in the centrality of poetry writing in the English curriculum probably value the benefits that can be accrued from such an activity. Prescott

(2012), for example, indicates that 'creative writing and its teaching strategies have enormous potential to add energy and significance to students' learning across many fields of study' (p. 156). Unfortunately, most evidence in support of the idea that poetry writing is of benefit to students is not based on solid research. As Wilson (2009) points out, 'Claims for poetry's importance within the curriculum…are largely based on opinion formed from practice rather than empirical studies' (p. 387). However, the significance of such practice-based views should not be easily dismissed as works by Hughes (1967), Rosen (1998), Yates (1999) and others have done much to inspire and support teachers interested in encouraging students to write poetry.

Students' engagement in poetry writing seems to lead to a number of benefits that have to do with identity and self-expression, especially because it has the capacity to 'crystallise a personal, felt response' (Collie & Slater, 1987, p. 61). Moxley and Stoval (1991) make a case for the teaching of creative writing by emphasising the idea that 'Beyond offering a cathartic release, these writing experiences will enable students to understand their own lives' (p. 9). For Lambirth (2007), 'Children who are encouraged to write poetry also become involved in a process of self-discovery – it assists children in understanding their experiences of everyday life' (p. 3). Obied (2007) claims that for students coming from cultures other than the dominant one, poetry writing can be a significant means of engaging with English as well as acting as a medium that allows them to express their thoughts and feelings about their own cultural experiences, especially if the learning process is 'collaborative, intercultural and interactive' (p. 51). Dymoke (2009) believes that 'poetry can give students opportunities to express their feelings when they would feel overwhelmed by writing in other forms' (p. 86). Hennessy and Mannix McNamara (2012) report that 'Pupils noted poetry writing as important in developing awareness of poetic technique, and also acting as an outlet for cathartic reflection, self-exploration, and self-expression' (p. 388). To some extent these benefits are also part of a substantial amount of literature that views the composition of poetry at school as a therapeutic activity (Hitchcock, 2005; Williams, 2011, 2012; Wissman & Wiseman, 2011). Feldman (2011), for example, claims that poetry writing helps high school students 'gain insights into themselves and their peers as they collaborate' (pp. 102-103). The collaborative work on the process of writing that features in activities like shared writing (Booth & Swartz, 2004; Palmer & Corbett, 2003; Xerri, 2011) is in

Cox's (1991) opinion what is missing from the product approach typical of traditional essay writing; this is why Oczkus (2007) equates the latter approach with 'a boring writing environment' (p. ix). Poetry writing is seen as an activity that allows young people to discover and verbalise insights about themselves and the world they live in. It enables them to overcome the boundaries between the classroom and private environments (Erixon, 2004).

Poetry writing can also be a community building activity. In fact, Sautter (1991) describes the act of sharing one's writing with others and inviting response as a form of community building. An audience of real readers is essential in order for creative writing to come to life, something that the traditional literary essay does not really provide them with (Cox, 1991). It is for this reason that peer response and assessment are seen as important (Beach & Marshall, 1991; Dymoke, 2003). When students write poetry for the first time they might feel 'skeptical about how their work will be received' (Mitchell, 2002, p. 166), however, the act of speaking about their writing helps students to achieve a 'metacognitive and metalinguistic awareness' (Milian, 2005, p. 335). If a teacher were to model the process for students it might help to create the kind of classroom environment Dymoke (2003) describes, in which students 'are hungry to share their immediate reactions and to spark off each other's ideas' (p. 44). Mitchell (2002) narrates that when she shared one of her poems in class she first asked students to offer their interpretations then provided them with her own thoughts on the poem. She emphasised to them that the writer's presence in class did not discredit their own readings. The fact that poetry writing leads to a sense of community is a reminder of Vakil's (2008) idea that what a teacher gets out of the whole process of creative writing is a diminishment of his or her 'static authority' (p. 165).

Poetry writing is also credited with being able to improve students' linguistic knowledge and skills. Poetry promotes language acquisition because it 'teaches children to listen, develop vocabulary, learn to read and write, and think creatively' (Holmes & Moulton, 2001, p. 3). Moreover, 'Added benefits accrue when second language students engage in poetry writing' (Holmes & Moulton, 2001, p. 3), this being especially relevant to students in Malta. Spiro (2004) affirms that 'a focus on form and language is exactly what makes poetry different from other written texts' (p. 7). By means of poetry writing activities teachers 'encourage the learner to be creative and to use strategies for applying the familiar to the unfamiliar – just as

poets do' (Spiro, 2004, p. 7). Close attention to the vocabulary and grammar of a model text is recommended by Booth and Swartz (2004) as a means of mastering how a poet creates a desired effect and leaves an impact on the reader. In fact, a focus on grammar during a shared writing activity is addressed as part of the UK's National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 2000). Lambirth (2007) explains that 'The writing of poetry, with its emphasis on vocabulary and heightened language use can only help develop the writer's ability to experiment with the potency of written forms' (p. 3). For Tompkins (2008), 'Children benefit from experiences with poems; they develop a sensitivity to language and learn to play with words and evoke fresh images' (p. 263). This is why Corbett (2010) emphasises the need for teachers to guide their students towards the most original and creative words and ideas and to discourage them from opting for clichés. Basing himself on the results of a small-scale study, Wilson (2009) contends that 'poetry writing can be an aid to language development, enabling children to engage with creative habits of mind and extending their schemas of what writing can achieve' (p. 388). The Poetry Trust (2010), a UK organisation founded by poets for the purpose of poetry promotion and talent development, states that through poetry writing young people 'may gain an understanding of the way words can carry complex and subtle meanings and experience the exhilaration and pleasure there is in stitching words together' (p. 1). Poetry writing is thus seen as being a fundamental means by which English teachers may enhance their students' mastery of language skills, which 'will benefit them in all areas of the curriculum and beyond' (The Poetry Trust, 2010, p. 1). For post-secondary students the most significant benefit that they derive from poetry writing is probably their ability to read poetry in a critical manner.

2.8.2 The Reciprocity of Poetry Reading and Writing

Poetry writing is very much dependent on how much reading students do, however, their ability to read poetry is strengthened if they are provided with the opportunity of adopting a writer's guise. Elkins (1976) maintains that 'Writing poetry teaches students much about the genre itself' (p. 221) while Beach and Marshall (1991) argue that there is 'a necessary and organic connection between the reading and writing of poetry that poets understand, students need to experience, and English teachers all too often forget' (p. 392). Cox (1991) sees reading and writing as being 'intimately related' (p. 80) while Sloan (2003) points out that the reading of poetry is a

prerequisite for an effective poetry writing lesson: 'Success stories do begin with *reading* poetry, lots of it, with no strings attached' (p. 33). Such reading helps students develop 'sufficient familiarity with poetry to notice things about its construction' (Sloan, 2003, p. 33). Dymoke (2003) explains that 'the requirement to read and write about poetry in public examinations is viewed by many teachers as an increasingly heavy burden. By making a stronger link between reading and writing this burden can be lightened' (p. 190). This is in line with the idea that poetry writing 'should be encouraged more widely so that students can engage with poetry in a personal way and gain a fuller appreciation of how the poets they are studying draft their work' (Dymoke, 2003, p. 18). In fact, Benton (1999) reports that poetry writing 'is seen as an important means of both illuminating the writing process and of "de-mystifying" the work of writers they study so that they find them "less intimidating"' (p. 528). It seems clear that students' knowledge of poetry is increased both by reading a broad selection of poems and by means of poetry writing (Mitchell, 2002; Wainwright, 2004). Encouraging students to write poetry needs to be seen as a beneficial activity for students and not as a distraction from attaining curricular targets.

In fact, it is probably high time that more teachers appreciate the idea that poetry writing helps to enhance students' critical reading skills (Burdan, 2004). Spiro (2004) affirms that 'By understanding better what it feels like to be a writer, students will also be more active and confident in their enjoyment of reading' (p. 10). According to Austen (2005), the inclusion of creative writing in literature courses can help students' own engagement with literary texts by resulting in the following benefits: '(1) dispelling the awe of literature and creating active learners; (2) developing critical readers; (3) furthering student understanding of literary criticism' (p. 139). Beach et al. (2006) concur and point out that poetry writing helps students to position themselves as writers and to notice how poems are constructed. While not demanding the abolition of traditional literary criticism essays, Cox (1991) feels that creative writing actually leads to a heightened critical awareness of a writer's style. Green (2009) argues that at A-level 'Formalising students' thought processes about their creative dialogue with texts through the act of writing also enriches the act of reading' (p. 192). In his opinion, 'By engaging students within the creative processes of textual creation…teachers can encourage them to read like writers and to write like readers' (Green, 2009, p. 193). Eaglestone (2009) explains that 'Creative writing

is another important way of engaging with literature, another of the new ideas that are reshaping English as a subject, stressing the *heuristic*, learning by doing' (p. 112). By means of such methods as critical rewriting, students learn how texts mean and this shows that 'the creativity of writing and the creativity of reading are really…the same thing' (Eaglestone, 2009, p. 113). Poetry writing strengthens students' ability to read in a critical manner, the latter being one of the primary aims of such post-secondary English syllabi as MC English.

The interdependence of critical reading and poetry writing is sometimes disregarded and this probably leads to an inability on the part of students to master either of these skills. According to writer and Professor of Creative Writing Fay Weldon (2009), those at the receiving end of post-secondary education need to see evidence of further reading on the part of their creative writing students: 'Too many come to us with A levels but without any experience of a complete book. Too many still believe they can write books without first having read them' (p. 173). The poets Suzanne Keyworth and Cassandra Robison (2015) are firm believers in the idea that in order for students to master poetry writing they need to learn its craft through the scaffolding provided by the reading of poetry:

> Just as the music student listens to the great musicians and tries to emulate them or learns the notes and time signatures that are the foundation of music, the student of poetry can learn from strong poems and masterful poets what poetry is, how it works, and what it can and should do. (p. 3)

Similarly, Schillinger et al. (2010) highlight the sense of dependency that exists between the reading and writing of poetry. Their views are to some extent shared by Bluett (2010), for whom reading poetry for writing purposes 'makes one engage with the poem in a very immediate and vital way' (p. 46). Olsen (2010) posits that 'Through creative attention to the reading and reuse of found materials students can be offered roles as writers who are conceptually engaged in the continual reflection on and redefinition of what constitutes poetic practice' (p. 155). In Wilson's (2011) opinion, 'creative writing can be used to enhance literary response alongside critical thinking and writing' (p. 443). For this reason creative writing teachers 'must empower students to think for themselves while learning how to read, write, re-read and re-write creatively' (Disney, 2012, p. 7). This is significant given that 'teaching

poetry writing is about understanding the process and not just about implementing a series of tips. When pupils feel liberated in their writing they can go on to more ambitious work' (Fleming & Stevens, 2015, p. 190). Capitalizing on the reciprocity of critical reading and poetry writing helps A-level English students to meet assessment targets while also intensifying their personal engagement with texts.

2.8.3 Pedagogical Obstacles

One of the main obstacles facing the incorporation of poetry writing in the post-secondary English curriculum is the suspicion that it is impossible to teach such a set of skills. Benton (1986) found that the 'fundamental division over the worth of this aspect of poetry teaching is very strong' (p. 16), with teachers either adopting a Romantic view of why students should be encouraged to write poetry or else scepticism in relation to whether they enjoy doing it or are actually adept at it. Aware of such scepticism, Sloan (2003) affirms that 'Certain beliefs have grown up like weeds around the subject of poetry writing' (p. 34). Tompkins (2008) tackles one of these widely held beliefs by saying that 'Perhaps it is true that great poets are born, not made, but every child can write poems and enjoy the experience' (p. 263). While admitting that as an idea it 'now seems rather naïve', Hyland (2009) indicates that the teaching of creative writing is underpinned by 'the basic assumption that all writers have similar innate intellectual and creative potential and simply require the right conditions to express this' (p. 20). Pugliese (2010) seems to operate on this assumption when he affirms that 'Creativity is a dynamic concept…it is not unique to certain gifted individuals, and it is not genetically learned' (p. 19). The cultivation of students' creativity is to some extent dependent on teachers' own efforts to engage in creative thinking and teaching: 'creative teachers are such, precisely because they have made a conscious effort to be creative – they have, in other words, *decided* to be creative' (Pugliese, 2010, p. 15). The writer and creative writing teacher Lesley Thomson (2013) believes that it is possible to teach creative writing but just because one is a writer it does not mean one can teach: 'while possessing the knowledge of their profession, to teach inexperienced and motivated writers, a writer needs knowledge of effective teaching approaches' (p. 45). This undermines the commonly held belief that only professional poets can teach poetry writing. It also helps to reinforce the idea that teachers possess the potential to engage their students in such

an activity as part of the English curriculum if they are provided with the right kind of support by an educational system that overvalues standardized testing.

2.8.4 Curricular and Assessment Pressures

In a number of educational contexts poetry writing is shunned because teachers and examination boards might not consider it suitable for assessment. Dymoke (2002) finds it disconcerting that 'Students' own poetry writing is even perceived as an inappropriate activity in some contexts' and thinks that 'This is a good example of the struggle to find a legitimate place for poetry writing within an assessment driven curriculum' (pp. 85-86). In the US, for example, 'If a skill…can't be tested with multiple-choice items or simple three- and five-paragraph essays, then it won't be taught' (Petrosky & Reid, 2004, p. 3). Ofsted (2007) highlights the 'irony' of the fact that in secondary school 'pupils spend a significant amount of time studying poetry written by others but most of them write no poems of their own' (p. 9). This partly happens because teachers consider poetry writing to be 'difficult to teach and assess' and because for most of them 'there is too little time in a crowded examination timetable for what they perceive as a luxury' (Ofsted, 2007, p. 9). Despite 'the thirst among school students' to engage in creative writing, Vakil (2008) found that in the curriculum this was being 'marginalised' and that 'Teachers were being forced by the pressure of syllabi and exams to teach prescribed texts and extracts from texts' (p. 158). Mansoor (2010) shows how in an L2 context the introduction of creative writing faces a number of 'stumbling blocks' due to students being 'more accustomed to pursuing clearly defined lines of thought as articulated by a teacher or a text book…coupled with the fear of losing grades' (p. 202). Rinkevich (2011) argues that 'The current emphasis on standardized testing and accountability has undoubtedly played a part in diminishing teacher and learner creativity' (p. 219). When examination 'specifications offer limited opportunities for assessment of students' written poetry', teachers find 'it hard to make time for poetry writing in lessons' (Dymoke, 2012, p. 406). A study by Simmerman et al. (2012) shows how teachers claimed not to have enough time for poetry writing because of 'time constraints imposed by other curriculum demands' (p. 299). The marginalization of poetry writing is mostly due to it being perceived as an add-on activity rather than a crucial part of what English teachers and students should be doing in class.

The sidelining of poetry writing is partly a result of curricular and assessment pressures, however, not many students and teachers seem satisfied with the situation. In a study of student beliefs about poetry teachers, Hennessy and Mannix McNamara (2012) found that 'Encouraging and facilitating poetry composition was seen as integral to the role of an effective poetry teacher by many interviewees. A large number of pupils commented critically on the lack of space for poetry writing within their classes' (p. 388). Whilst acknowledging that the status of poetry writing is not firmly established in the curriculum, Wilson (2013) reports that in a target-driven educational culture teachers 'enjoy the prospect of entering creative spaces where they are by definition free of outside control while remaining aware that not to do so would be to risk losing ownership of the "bedrock" of their subject' (p. 82). Curricular and assessment pressures might be severely hampering teachers from fully engaging their students in poetry writing but this is not to say that the blame can be directed solely at those who draft syllabi and examination specifications.

2.8.5 Teacher Training and Positioning as Poetry Writers

In order for poetry writing to flourish in the English classroom, teachers need to be in the vanguard of creative practice. However, this can only happen if they are provided with the means to critically reflect on their attitudes, beliefs and practices, and to position themselves as writers of poetry. Teachers' attitudes and beliefs in relation to poetry writing can affect the frequency of such an activity in class and the level of engagement expected of students. A US study by Blythe and Sweet (2005) shows that while expected to teach creative writing, English teachers are not formally trained in how to do so. This lack of training goes counter to the idea that 'With writing and teaching writing you have to be in it for the long haul' (Turvey, 2007, p. 158). It partly accounts for students' writing remaining at novice level and for 'feelings of inadequacy' (Simmerman et al., 2012, p. 300) on the part of teachers. This is why Hennessy and Mannix McNamara (2012) note that 'Facilitating the development of an empowering teacher agency at pre-service level can, in no small part, encourage teachers to provide the space required for pupils to engage critically and creatively with poetry' (p. 391). In order to cultivate such creative spaces in the classroom, training at both pre-service and in-service levels needs to not only equip teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to teach poetry writing but also to supply them with opportunities to develop their own stance as poets.

The way teachers position themselves in the poetry classroom can have an impact on students' attitudes towards poetry writing. For Burkhardt (2006), those 'Teachers who share their own poetry with students, both early drafts and polished verses, provide powerful coaching' (p. 73). The poet Kwame Alexander (as cited in Aronson, 2015) explains that when seeking to engage young people with poetry, 'You have to be willing to, what I call "dance naked on the floor," to put yourself out there… I shared my own poetry and let them see that I was going to be vulnerable to them' (p. 18). Teachers who do this kind of thing probably see creative writing as 'an educational process that permits deeper engagement with the already written' (Knights & Thurgar-Dawson, 2006, p. 19). When teachers position themselves as teacher-poets they are provided with deep insights into their students' sentiments and lived experiences (Issitt & Issitt, 2010). Moreover, those teachers 'who assume the identity of "writer" and write alongside their students are likely to facilitate writing improvement in their students in terms of motivation and performance' (Locke, Whitehead, Dix, & Cawkwell, 2011, p. 277). Even when poetry writing is not part of the curriculum, teachers who choose to write poetry with students manage to boost their sense of engagement (Xerri, 2011). The need to ensure such outcomes underscores the significance of positioning oneself as more than a teacher of a collection of poems that students are expected to write essays about in the exam.

However, if teachers fail to reconceptualise their role vis-à-vis poetry then poetry writing will remain at the periphery of what happens in class. Refraining from writing creatively 'is likely to increase teachers' sense of uncertainty and personal discomfort in teaching creative writing in a meaningful way to A level students' (Green, 2009, p. 188). If poetry writing is perceived as a specialization that does not fall within the scope of English teachers' interests and duties then this activity is not going to have a chance of flourishing in class. In the UK and Australia, for example, creative writing is most often associated with writers who visit schools to do workshops with students. Such residencies are to a large extent rewarding despite the fact that benefits are harder to achieve in secondary schools due to curricular and assessment pressures (Owen & Munden, 2010). However, for the National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE) these residencies are truly successful when they act as a form of INSET for teachers and allow them to develop as writers. Poetry workshops led by published poets help teachers to broaden their awareness of a range of innovative methods that can be used during a poetry lesson: 'The poets

inspire, encourage and support teachers to write poetry as well as read it themselves' (Smith, 2008, p. 8). In Bluett's (2010) opinion, 'All English teachers should be involved in the writing process. It has long been thought good practice for teachers also to be practising writers, modelling the activity for students' (p. 57). For NAWE (2010), 'It is increasingly clear that creative writing is best nurtured in the classroom by teachers who are willing to engage with writing themselves – indeed who see themselves as practising writers.' Ings (2009) agrees with this and highlights 'the importance of building teachers' confidence' and of 'developing teachers' own practice as writers' (pp. 74-75) through continuing professional development. Teacher training plays a fundamental role in helping to nudge teachers into adopting the stance of teacher-poets. It is by positioning themselves in this way that teachers can be fully convinced of the necessity of engaging as many students as possible in poetry writing. An overdependence on published poets to provide young people with the opportunity of enjoying the craft of poetry writing might minimise their engagement with it given that this can only take place when a poet is invited to a school. Moreover, since most often the logistics of such a visit make it impossible for all the students of a school to attend the workshop, only a few of them will be fortunate enough to benefit from the poet's visit.

One of the reasons for which teachers fail to position themselves as writers of poetry is that they lack adequate support. Gallavan, Bowles and Young (2007) report that 'teacher educators voice apprehension about candidates' abilities, much less their expertise, to model and support writing as forms of expression and reflection essential for learning and schooling as well as working and living' (p. 61). Some of the challenges indicated by teachers include lack of confidence as writers, poor histories as writers, lack of meaningful professional development, and lack of time (Street & Stang, 2008). Enabling teachers to develop the necessary knowledge, skills and beliefs to ingrain poetry writing as part of their professional identity is crucial if it is to flourish amongst young people. Harward et al.'s (2014) study shows that effective writing teachers 'considered the writing process essential and perceived themselves as good writers. These dispositions affected the ways they approached writing in their classroom and scaffolded their students' writing experiences' (p. 215). The act of engaging in creative writing functions 'as a self-empowering tool to achieve particular social positioning and hence self-esteem' (Zhao, 2014, p. 452). Providing teachers with the opportunity to participate in poetry writing workshops as

part of pre-service teacher education and continuing professional development is a means of aiding them to step into the role of creative writing teachers with confidence and competence.

2.8.6 Poetry Writing Workshops within Teacher Education and Development

The writers' workshop was institutionalised at the University of Iowa in 1936. Ever since then creative writing became recognised as a discipline. According to Glover (2010), 'It is not a big claim to say that the idea and practices of the writers' workshop (or writers' group) are at the centre of the discipline and its pedagogy' (p. 123). Writing workshops are considered fundamental in enabling those who want to write professionally to acquire the competences needed for such a role. But besides professional writers, writing workshops have the potential to assist post-secondary teachers who might wish to engage students in poetry writing activities. The idea that only professional writers can teach creative writing is a mistaken one as it is based on the belief that creative writing is a special subject with a special set of requirements for those who teach it which makes it entirely distinct from all other subjects taught at school. For Thomson (2013), the issue to consider is not whether it is possible to teach creative writing but whether 'a published writer is qualified per se to teach creative writing. Unless they are willing to learn how to teach alongside their development as a writer, I think they aren't' (p. 52). By extension, this means that those who want to teach poetry writing to young people at post-secondary schools but are not professional poets might need support to position themselves as writers.

There is plenty of evidence attesting to the idea that writing workshops have the potential to help teachers develop the competences and identity of a writer. According to Elbaz-Luwisch (2002), writing workshops constitute 'a space not only for thinking aloud and sharing, but also for engaging in inquiry and restorying, a space in which the diversity of voices that enable teachers to express their concerns, hopes, and fears can be heard' (p. 425). The fact that a writing workshop provides teachers with the tools to hone their writing as well as with an audience for their writing is significant given that 'A writer in any rhetorical situation needs to understand the content of her idea, conceptualize her audience, and work through a writing process in order to write effectively' (Magnifico, 2010, p. 181). A writing workshop 'challenges educators to reflect on their writer identities and how those might translate into their writing instruction' (Vetter, 2011, p. 195). One way of

doing this is by asking teachers 'to represent metaphorically what a writer is to them. They could compare that representation with the kind of writer identity they foster through instruction with their students' (Vetter, 2011, p. 195). Enabling them to develop the identity of a writer is significant given that most writing workshops for teachers are based on the 'hypothesis…that when teachers embrace the professional identity of writer, their practices as teachers of writing undergo a transformation that enhances the experience of and performance in the writing of their students' (Locke et al., 2011, p. 273). The fact that students also reap the benefits of teachers participating in a poetry writing workshop is a powerful case for its incorporation in teacher education and development.

By making poetry writing workshops an intrinsic component of teacher education and development, practitioners and their students will be able to engage in poetry writing activities more effectively. According to Fearn and Farnan (2007), 'There is but one reason for professional education in writing: to ensure that the students of our pre-service teachers and those who participate in our professional development write better as a result. Nothing else matters' (p. 27). A writing workshop for pre-service teachers would allow them to 'rediscover writing and have multiple experiences as writers to draw upon when they are in the classroom. They need opportunities to write for themselves, to live the same curriculum and experiences they can later use with their own students' (Morgan, 2010, p. 352). For similar reasons, poetry writing workshops should also be a staple feature of teacher development. Given the fact that 'professional development appears to be more prevalent and influential, it seems imperative to have professional opportunities for teachers to engage in writing themselves' (McCarthey & Ro, 2011, p. 292). Studies show that professional development is cited as being the most influential factor for effective teachers of writing (Harward et al., 2014; Simmerman et al., 2012). Fitzgerald, Smith and Monk (2012) affirm that 'By participating in a creative writing experience, teachers not only open up new perspectives for their student-learners, but also for themselves' (p. 61). Besides boosting their confidence (Locke et al., 2011), writing workshops as part of professional development also help to change teachers' writing pedagogy. For example, Levitt et al. (2014) show how by participating in a yearlong writing workshop teachers moved away from teaching writing separately from content and from the process approach, and 'chose to adopt a strong skills-oriented approach to teaching writing, especially with struggling students' (p. 259). It

seems clear that poetry writing workshops need to form part of teachers' professional learning both at pre- and in-service levels.

2.9 Assessment

Given that the study participants read and studied poetry in an educational environment geared towards preparing students for a high stakes examination, it is important to review the literature on assessment in poetry education. The emphasis placed on assessment might undermine students' engagement with poetic texts and hinder the reading of poetry for personal pleasure (Xerri, in press-b). In English, one of the traditional ways of assessing students' knowledge of poetry has for long been the essay, either as an assignment or else as part of an examination. The essay is sometimes construed as the only means of engaging students with a poem and they are most often encouraged to omit their personal response from the essay. However, a possible washback effect of this might be that it leads to a reductive approach to poetry in the classroom. In fact, Carter and Long (1991) criticise the 'rigid formulae' governing literature examinations because these 'run counter to and not effectively assess the kinds of capacities and literary competences teachers may want to develop in their students' (p. 166). The twenty-first century has not really resulted in a transition in the way students' knowledge of poetry is assessed and this means that the approach to poetry is still negatively influenced by the examinations that students sit for at the end of a course of study. Teachers' and students' attitudes and beliefs in relation to assessment in poetry education might bear an influence on their classroom practices primarily by leading to a limited approach to poetry in a lesson.

2.9.1 Contemporary Assessment Culture

Just like other subjects, English is being affected by the heavy emphasis placed on assessment in the contemporary educational scenario. Assessment has an impact on teaching and learning and constricts what takes place in the classroom. This is occurring in a wide range of international contexts, most notably in the USA where high stakes testing is becoming the chief means of assessing students and gauging teacher and school accountability. High stakes testing is criticized for reproducing social and educational inequality (Au, 2008) and for being mechanistic and reductive (Allen, 2012). High stakes tests are described as 'oppressive' because they 'undermine quality teaching and learning, and…make students vulnerable in the

classroom to a narrowly focused curriculum in which teachers teach to the test' (Grant, 2004, p. 6). The unintended outcomes of high stakes testing are largely negative, especially on instruction and on teacher and student motivation (Jones, 2007).

Teachers of English around the world may find that their practices are being affected by assessment in a number of ways. Currently, the driving force behind the curriculum seems to be constituted by 'the pressures of assessment systems that pay little heed to consistency or coherence between teachers' visions of desirable education and those articulated in high-stakes examinations' (Atkin, 2007, p. 57). These pressures impinge on classroom practice, stifle teachers' views and make them feel disenfranchised (Nichols & Berliner, 2007). Assessment might lead teachers to 'increasingly feel that they are at the mercy of forces beyond their control' (Reich & Bally, 2010, p. 181) and that they are being pressured to change their instructional practices (Hoffman, Assaf, & Paris, 2001) thus affecting the way they respond to students' learning needs (Pennington, 2004). In fact, Taras (2005) argues that 'the terrors evoked by the term "assessment" have distorted its necessity, centrality and its potentially neutral position' (p. 469). Pishghadam et al. (2014) found that 'teachers who do not esteem assessment as a sign of school quality or an improvement tool for learning, and deem assessment negative, bad and unfair, may become exhausted, indifferent, and finally experience burnout to a higher degree' (p. 46). It seems as if the inordinate amount of emphasis being placed on assessment in the contemporary educational scenario is leading to a variety of negative repercussions on teaching and learning.

2.9.2 Assessing Literature Learning

The teaching and learning of a number of areas in English are prone to being affected by the apparent obsession with assessment in contemporary education. This is especially true of literature. The essay test is an intrinsic part of most literature courses, however, since very early on it has been heavily criticized because of its washback effect, structure and purpose. Holbrook (1967), for example, warns against the negative washback effect of literature examinations on teaching methodology. Courses that are too heavily dependent on examinations do not provide students with sufficient training in the creative aspects of English and even essays written at school act as a form of training for what the examination requires, rather than what the

subject requires (Holbrook, 1967). Such essays reveal that the traditional literature examination 'tyrannises over the whole syllabus' (Holbrook, 1967, p. 66). The traditional examination essay question inhibits good teaching and impels teachers to resort to the 'process of explicating texts, providing notes and practice for model answers, and suggesting tactics for the manipulation of generalisations into shapes required by different questions' (SED, 1968, p. 28). Ineffective teaching leads to a situation in which students present examiners with 'stale second-hand opinions memorised from teachers' notes or some standard authority' and in this way manifest 'a dreary unthinking orthodoxy' (SED, 1968, p. 33). If teachers fall into the temptation of providing students with a ready-packaged truth rather than encouraging them to work towards it they would be guilty of 'short-circuiting the educational process' (SED, 1968, p. 35). Stratta et al. (1973) claim that 'If experience of literature loses its enjoyment, it will be discarded as irrelevant' (p. 41). Given that 'enjoyment is a primary goal of teaching literature, measurement and evaluation procedures must do nothing to violate this objective' (Elkins, 1976, p. 281). If examinations undermine students' engagement with literature they are not genuinely contributing to the learning process.

Due to the idea that they do more harm than good, the very existence of literature examinations is questioned. Gribble (1983), for example, asserts that examinations 'undermine the belief that reading literature might be of consequence for the way we view our lives and those of others' (p. 3). They tend to encourage teaching approaches that are 'stereotyped, formulaic and sterile' (Gribble, 1983, p. 96) and this breeds disillusionment in students and makes them question the value of literary studies. According to Jackson (1984), examinations make teachers feel anxious and lead them to adopt a transmissive approach which acts as an impediment to students' own responses and encourages them to memorise notes and facts about the text. Students are not given an opportunity of engaging with the text in an activity-based and student-centred environment because 'very often the formal constraints of the examination essay scare pupils and teachers into hiding behind stock orthodoxies' (Jackson, 1984, p. 215). Scott (1989) feels that even though most teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about literature they allow the examination to negatively affect their teaching and in the process they end up spoiling their students' appreciation and enjoyment of literature. Carter and Long (1991) agree with this and maintain that the 'short-term needs of passing examinations which may require

knowledge about literature…may have to conflict with a longer-term pay-off for students in the form of personal engagement with literature and a lasting enjoyment in reading and interpreting for oneself' (p. 27). Parkinson and Reid Thomas (2000) mention that many teachers and students resent assessment's interference with their efforts to engage with literature for pleasure. However, this does not mean that the assessment of literature learning has to be dispensed with altogether. Despite the fact that assessment leads to anxiety for both teachers and students, they do 'acknowledge that assessment is part of the system and that we must devise fair, consistent, and accurate ways of assessing learning' (Showalter, 2003, p. 18). This is important given that 'Learning paradigms are also shaped by assessment criteria, which dictate much of what students actually do' (Nightingale, 2007, p. 139). Hence, it seems paramount to devise forms of assessment that lead to positive changes in the teaching and learning of literature.

2.9.3 Poetry and Assessment

Poetry has been identified as being especially susceptible to the demands of assessment given the fact that it is sometimes misconceived as a specialist genre. The connection between poetry and assessment is perceived in a rather negative manner, especially due to the washback effect that examinations have on poetry teaching and learning. An early publication posits that examinations aimed at discovering whether a poem has been understood are 'illogical and tautologous…a degradation of poetry' (Muir, Niblett, Le M. Simpson, & Newbold Whitfield, 1937, p. 6). Mathieson (1980) comments on how teachers' preoccupation with examinations is to blame for the problems they encounter when teaching poetry. The effects of assessment and the way poetry is examined are of concern to most teachers and are perceived as detrimental to students' engagement with poetry (Benton, 1999). Many teachers have acutely experienced the dilemma of being 'pulled in two directions by, on the one hand, the detailed analysis of poetry which they felt obliged to undertake for the purposes of examinations and, on the other, by their desire to let the pupils explore it for themselves' (Benton, 1999, p. 522). Assessment has 'reduced [teachers'] freedom to choose what and how they taught', and the apparent 'need to deliver the "right" answer has meant some teachers see themselves spoon-feeding classes too much and spending a disproportionate time on technicalities' (Benton, 1999, p. 530). Even though teachers seem to value a response-based approach to the teaching of poetry,

when preparing students for examinations they feel under pressure to ensure that their students can deliver appropriate answers (Dymoke, 2002). Sedgwick (2003) reports that teachers are unable to teach poetry as creatively as they would like to because of the pressure of examinations and he calls this 'a dangerous state of affairs' (p. 99). Calway (2008) affirms that teachers of English fear poetry because of examination specifications; their enjoyment is replaced with anxiety and uncertainty. Poetry makes teachers feel 'alarmed, naked and inadequate' and feeling compelled to decipher a poem 'is scary when an exam class is in front of you demanding to know what it "means"' (Calway, 2008, p. 60). The anxiety created by the belief that examiners are expecting a specific kind of response to a poem seems to be one of the leading factors for which some teachers probably use a restrictive kind of pedagogy when teaching poetry. Ofsted (2007) suggests that students' view that the study of poetry is 'dull and pointless…was largely formed by the didactic approaches used by some teachers to prepare pupils for examinations' (p. 7). According to Snapper (2009b), the 'exclusive emphasis on written literary analysis of poetry under exam conditions which dominates from GCSE onwards, along with a significant reduction in time spent on other modes of response (such as performance), and on creative writing' (p. 2) only serves to bolster students' alienation from poetry. This implies that examinations end up killing the creativity of a poetry lesson by encouraging teachers and students to focus almost exclusively on analysis and annotations in the hope of covering all possible examination questions. According to Ofsted (2012), this approach to poetry is an example of 'the negative impact of tests and examinations' (p. 44). Naylor and Wood (2012) affirm that 'Poetry has become part of the mechanism of assessment at GCSE, such that the pressures on the study of it have become burdensome' (p. 8). In their opinion,

> The pressure to provide guaranteed 'C' grades and above leaves English teachers little room for failure. This means that the freedom for teachers to be creative and innovative is limited, counter-pointed by the absolute requirement to deliver in exams and assessments, therefore playing safe. (Naylor & Wood, 2012, pp. 19-20)

It seems as if assessment forces teachers to adopt teaching methods that lead students to pass their examinations successfully rather than enjoy poetry.

Students seem to share their teachers' anxiety and this has a negative effect on the way they engage with poetry during a lesson. In fact, a Maltese study indicates that 'students feel the need to "learn" the poem because of how the assessment system is structured, ending up reading poetry notes only to reproduce them in examinations in order to get more marks' (Camilleri, 2005, p. 51). Snapper (2006a) remarks that 'Often students come to A Level – and leave A Level – seeing poems as irritating little verbal puzzles set to test them in exams, to see whether they can get the right answer' (p. 32). MC English examiners seek to dispel this myth by indicating that 'the overall aim' of the unseen poem component in the examination 'is neither a treasure hunt for meanings nor a chase after the "right" interpretation' (MATSEC, 2009, p. 8). Despite these reassurances, teachers and students persist in perceiving poems as texts that need to be unravelled. For this reason, Snapper (2009b) contemplates 'whether the current regime, where poetry is so strongly associated with an increasingly reductive, instrumental examination culture, is in fact counter-productive' (p. 2). Teachers and students are led to forget that poetry has a life outside the classroom and examination hall and by failing to comprehend its relationship with the world beyond the educational context they are unlikely to enjoy it (Snapper, 2009b). It seems clear that an assessment-oriented approach to poetry has the potential of undermining students' engagement with the genre for much longer than the duration of their studies. This is especially so if students come to inherit the misbelief that a poem can only be interpreted in a conventional manner.

A country's educational policy can have a negative impact on poetry, especially if it puts a premium on an assessment-driven approach that fails to put poetry at the very core of the English curriculum. For example, Goodwyn (2012) asserts that 'the story from England is a valuable "warning" to English teachers around the world to protect the true importance of literature from political interference' (p. 215). One of the effects of an assessment-driven curriculum is that 'time and examination pressures may lead to "teaching to the test", a falling off in enjoyment of poetry, a closing down of some things that teachers previously valued and a loss of the creative to the analytical' (Benton, 2000, p. 92). For Dymoke (2001), 'a productive dialogue about assessment approaches will prevent poetry from remaining neglected on a pedestal' (p. 39). Poetry teaching is reported as being 'weaker than other aspects of English inspected' (Ofsted, 2007, p. 5) and this is partly due to 'an inappropriate emphasis on tests and examinations' (Ofsted, 2012, p.

13) that is impinging on the English curriculum. This is particularly so in the case of poetry: 'Weaknesses in the teaching of poetry include an emphasis on analytic approaches at the expense of creative ones' (Ofsted, 2012, p. 44). In a study by Hanratty (2008), the majority of surveyed English teachers 'complained that the pernicious influence of an examination-driven curriculum could be particularly malign where the teaching of poetry is concerned' (p. 155). Despite the fact that it is highly rewarding to engage students with poetry in a sustained fashion, 'In many English classrooms, teachers are required to devise a curriculum that is strongly connected to high-stakes assessments' (Schillinger et al., 2010, p. 110). Goodwyn (2012) believes that 'current assessment regimes…diminish what is valuable in the engagement of students with literature' (p. 213). One possible solution to this problem lies in teacher education, which 'is perhaps best placed to offer critical challenge to the current dominance of exam-driven schooling and to call for radical change in terms of how teachers receive and implement curriculum' (Hennessy & Mannix McNamara, 2012, p. 390). Ensuring that teachers capitalize on creative approaches to poetry is probably one way out of the impasse but in order for teachers to do so they need to be empowered by pre- and in-service programmes that do not merely pander to the needs of an assessment-driven educational milieu. Lockney and Proudfoot (2013) maintain that 'current contexts for the teaching of poetry suggest we inhabit a space between encouragement for a creative pedagogy, set against the more prescriptive effects of an assessment-driven curriculum' (p. 150). An analysis of teachers' metaphors of poetry teaching highlights that while they describe it as a 'lifeline, freedom from directives and escape…it is also possible to infer a note of resignation in responses describing the status of poetry in a high-stakes context' (Wilson, 2013, pp. 82-83). Most probably teachers who wholeheartedly believe in poetry's place in the curriculum and in the significance of creative approaches to it are probably best placed to counter the effects of assessment-driven educational policy.

2.9.4 Alternative Approaches to Assessment

In order for assessment to contribute to students' engagement with literary texts in general and poetry in particular, ways of reforming literature assessment need to be considered. It is an acknowledgement of the negative washback effect of literature examinations on teaching and learning that leads to calls for radical change in the

way students are assessed on their ability to meet curricular expectations (SED, 1968). Carter and Long (1991) claim that the way students are assessed is 'not especially sophisticated and is in need of careful revision and reformulation' otherwise there is the risk of creating 'a recipe for cynicism or at best demotivation among teachers and students' (p. 174). For Spiro (1991), a test has beneficial washback when testing and teaching go hand-in-hand, when a test evolves out of classroom practice. The fact that teachers are usually excluded from participating in the development of high stakes tests risks widening the gap between the classroom and the examination. Teacher involvement in high stakes testing is beneficial because it capitalises on teachers' knowledge of the context, content and cohort (Xerri & Vella Briffa, in press-b), and because it leads to positive washback and impact on teaching and learning (Xerri & Vella Briffa, in press-a).

To reform the assessment of literature learning, alternative approaches to the traditional essay question might need to be taken into consideration. Dixon (1983) states that expecting students to write an essay in one hour 'seems such a travesty of the appropriate conditions for *anyone* to try to express what they have gained' from reading a text 'that I must reject it for the moment as indefensible' (p. 222). Snapper (2006a) feels that we need to 'envisage a different kind of assessment that does not tie us down to detailed, atomized readings of each set text condensed into 45 minutes of frenzied writing in exams' (p. 30). Certain sections of the literature course should 'be free from the constraints of external assessment in order to encourage wide reading, creative experimentation, and so on' (Snapper, 2006a, p. 30). The rigid focus on summative assessment through essay writing might constrain teachers' and students' approach to literature in the classroom as well as blight their enjoyment of literary texts. Hence, it might be necessary to take into consideration a variety of formal and informal modes of assessment.

Literature should be assessed by means of a blend of summative and formative modes of assessment (Marshall, 2011). Assessment *of* learning should be complemented by assessment *for* learning since the latter 'provides information to be used as feedback by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves and each other, to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged' (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2003, p. 2). Moreover, students would benefit from assessment *as* learning, in which they engage in self-monitoring, self-correction and adjustment with reference to personal goals and external standards

(Earl, 2003). Elkins (1976) feels that when assessing students it is important to use a variety of assessment measures since this proves motivating for students given that no single test can fully manifest their achievement. For example, the incorporation of coursework within the assessment of literature is lauded for bolstering interest on the part of students (Micallef & Galea, 1991). According to Baldacchino (1998), its use 'will help reduce the current emphasis on examinations and enhance activity-based learning, motivating students towards increased participation' (p. 110). In the use of tests it is important to minimize students' dependence on lecture notes by requiring contact with the text (Spiro, 1991), such as expecting students to engage with unseen poems as part of an examination. Moreover, it is also necessary to encourage candidates to identify with the texts they encounter and to provide a personal response to them (Spiro, 1991), thus translating motivating strategies in the classroom into the test situation. This would avoid a situation whereby the examination acts as a manipulative force inhibiting students' love for literature (Bartoli, 1994). If assessment is varied in its approaches there is a better chance of it enhancing teaching and learning, and bolstering students' engagement with literature.

Changing the way literature is assessed entails re-evaluating the syllabi that inform the process, especially the outcomes they consist of. Traditional literature syllabi consist of a series of general objectives and a list of the literary texts to be studied. However, there is the risk that teachers and students come to consider the syllabus as being comprised only of the set texts given that its objectives might be deemed too vague to be understood or given any attention (Abety, 1991). Parkinson and Reid Thomas (2000) maintain that a literature test should consist of a sample of all the important outcomes and that students should be aware of these outcomes. They advise test designers to strike a balance between assessing students' knowledge of facts, which include critics' opinions, and their ability to present their own views (Parkinson & Reid Thomas, 2000). An examination syllabus should thus consist of outcomes related to the skills of literary criticism, factual knowledge, the affective domain, and language competencies. Given that 'typical literature examination questions do not reflect integrated language and literature work' (Carter & Long, 1991, p. 166), it is important to assess learning about literature through students' speaking and listening skills besides their reading and writing skills. Parkinson and Reid Thomas (2000) suggest that during a course of study students should gradually be trained for integrated-skills tests, which 'have greater authenticity and real-world

validity than single-skill tests' (p. 151). Moreover, the syllabus should give students 'access to the bigger picture' by providing them with the opportunity to discuss 'critical debates and issues, questions of literary value and interpretation, the significance and development of genres, the nature of literary criticism, the purposes of literary study, and so on' (Snapper, 2006a, p. 30). Rethinking the content of syllabi might reinforce the positive washback of a literature examination, enrich the teaching and learning experience, and increase students' engagement with literary texts.

In the case of poetry, diversifying assessment methods and the range of learning outcomes in a syllabus is especially significant if the genre is not to be engaged with only for examination purposes. By not requiring students 'to respond to poetry in written or oral coursework, to read poems other than those being studied for the final examinations or to write poetry', examiners condemn poetry to 'become solely, and one could argue, deadeningly linked, with written response on terminal examination papers' (Dymoke, 2002, p. 85). The fact that students' poetry writing is deemed an inappropriate assessment activity illustrates the struggle it faces in finding a legitimate place for itself within an assessment driven culture (Dymoke, 2002). The 'exclusive emphasis on written literary analysis of poetry under exam conditions…along with a significant reduction in time spent on other modes of response (such as performance), and on creative writing' (Snapper, 2009b, p. 2) only serves to intensify students' alienation from poetry. Hence, there is a need for a range of approaches to assessment in poetry education so that different kinds of learners are stimulated and made to feel they own their responses (Dymoke, 2009). It entails using an approach that is not entirely geared towards assessment outcomes but which also fosters students' appreciation of poetry and creative engagement with a variety of poems. This ensures that 'the dead hand of the exam' does not come to rest on students and 'lead them to reject poetry for ever once they have jumped their last exam hurdle' (Dymoke, 2009, p. 95). It is paramount that assessment contributes to a lifelong engagement with poetry rather than dampening students' enthusiasm for it.

2.10 Conclusion

The above sections review the literature on the most seminal issues to this study, especially in relation to attitudes, beliefs and practices concerning poetry. Given that these three elements inform poetry's place on the curriculum, in the classroom, in teacher education and development, and in assessment, it was necessary to review the

literature on each one of these areas occupied by poetry. The literature review serves as the bedrock for this study's extension of these issues (see Chapters 5 and 6). The next chapter discusses the methodology used by this study to investigate the relationship between attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry. The choice of items that featured in each research instrument used in this study, i.e. the kind of questions I asked and the kind of lesson events I chose to observe, was informed by the above review of the literature on poetry education. The piloting of the instruments (Appendix 44) served the purpose of evaluating which items would enable me to answer the study's research questions most effectively, thus allowing this study to build on the existent literature.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This study explored the way poetry is approached by the teachers and students at the Department of English at Junior College. The term 'poetry' might be seen as requiring definition given that besides overlaps there might be differences amongst the participants' conceptualisations of the genre. Such differences and overlaps might also exist with my own view of poetry as a multimodal genre that transcends the printed page. Nonetheless, in my study I was primarily interested in poetry's position in an academic context in which a syllabus and a high stakes examination expected the participants to study poetry. Hence this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do teachers and students approach poetry in class?
2. What are the attitudes and beliefs of teachers and students in relation to poetry and the study of poetry?
3. What is the relationship between these attitudes and beliefs, and the way poetry is approached in class?

These questions served as the impetus for this study's research design. Therefore in this chapter I discuss the process of gathering and analysing data, the instruments used for this purpose, the reasons for which these instruments were chosen, and the challenges I had to overcome while conducting the study.

This chapter also shows how the reliability and the design of the instruments used to collect the data and thus answer the above research questions were enhanced by means of a pilot study carried out at a post-secondary institution that is approximately of a similar size and character to Junior College. Besides serving as a means of adjusting the research instruments so as to improve their effectiveness (Ary, Cheser Jacobs, Sorensen, & Razavieh, 2009), the pilot study also attempted to establish the trustworthiness of this particular inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Despite the fact that the main aim of the pilot study was 'procedural' (Andrews, 2003, p. 36), it yielded a small amount of data (Appendix 44) that acted as an indication of the kind of patterns and results to be expected during the main data analysis exercise. It thus enabled 'consistency checks of the findings generated by the various data collection methods' (Borman, Clarke, Cotner, & Lee, 2006, p. 136). Hence, the pilot study allowed me to check the feasibility of the main study. The

discussion of the different instruments used in this study contains sections devoted to the lessons learnt from the pilot study (see 3.5.1, 3.6.4, 3.7.2, 3.8.1 and 3.9.1).

This chapter starts by discussing issues that have to do with the nature of the study as a whole before narrowing its focus to the specific instruments I used to collect and analyse the data. I begin by considering case studies because my research focused on a small group of poetry teachers and students at a post-secondary school in Malta. I then evaluate the merits of the mixed methods approach I employed in my research as well as gloss on the methodological challenges I experienced in conducting my study. In discussing my research instruments I seek to show how these were refined by means of a piloting process. Lastly, I seek to show what measures I took to ensure that my study is in line with research ethics guidelines. By moving from a discussion of the broad to the more specific features of my study, this chapter seeks to show how I attempted to answer my research questions.

3.1 Researching Poetry Education

Despite a plethora of publications on poetry education produced by educators, poets and other stakeholders, there is still insufficient empirical research in this field (Gordon, 2010; Wilson, 2009, 2010, 2013). According to Wilson (2010), 'Much of the literature on poetry pedagogy could be described as rhetorical'; while it 'has been influential on generations of teachers' it 'is more substantial than that which is empirical and tends not to focus on teachers' conceptualisations of poetry' (p. 55). Despite the dearth of research on such conceptualisations, I preceded my investigation into teachers' and students' attitudes, beliefs and practices by reviewing the methods adopted by other researchers who had conducted studies on poetry education. This allowed me to form an awareness of what might be the most appropriate research design to use in my own study. All the instruments used in my research have been employed in other studies on poetry education, albeit in somewhat different ways at times. While a few studies have focused on the results generated by means of one specific instrument, others have utilized a mixed methods approach just as in my own study.

My research was designed as a case study in an effort to develop an in-depth understanding of poetry education at one particular institution. Despite having been used by other researchers focusing on literature pedagogy (e.g. McGarrell, 2010), case study research is not typical of most other studies in the field of poetry

education since these usually adopt a broader perspective. Nonetheless, case study research has been used by one of the key figures in the field. In an attempt to develop an insight into poetry pedagogy, Dymoke (2000) used case studies in order to 'investigate the work of teachers who were committed practitioners' (p. 68). She chose to focus on six poetry teachers working at different schools and 'to aim for as complete a picture of each teacher's work' (Dymoke, 2000, p. 68). Adopting an ethnographic position, her study sought to gain a holistic view of each teacher by means of interviews, classroom observation, and lesson records. Similarly, León (2010) used writing as inquiry and autoethnography as part of a case study 'uncovering the teacher/research perspective in the creating of poetic curriculum' (p. 4) at two high schools. My use of case study research differed in that I wanted to focus on a school as a case study and explore the attitudes, beliefs and practices of its teachers and students, as well as the attitudes and beliefs of the chief examiner responsible for the MC English syllabus and examination.

Popular as a means of measuring the attitudes of students and teachers towards literature (e.g. Hirvela & Boyle, 1988; McGarrell, 2010), questionnaires have also been deployed as a means of studying attitudes, beliefs and practices in poetry education. Benton (1984, 1999, 2000) used questionnaires in order to examine teachers' views on the teaching of poetry in secondary schools. The 1984 study used open-ended sentence completion questions in order to invite 170 teachers to evaluate the importance of the reading and discussion of poetry, and poetry writing, as well as indicate problems and concerns in relation to the teaching of poetry. The replication of the first study was conducted more than 15 years later with a group of over 100 teachers. While in both studies the majority of respondents considered poetry reading and writing in class to be important, Benton (1984, 1999) also found widespread fear and concerns amongst teachers. He maintains that it is 'a lack of resources in terms of personal experience of poetry and personal sympathy towards it that are at the heart of the difficulty' (Benton, 1984, p. 326). However, while the level of teachers' confidence in teaching poetry increased over the years, so did their concerns with the effects of assessment: 'time and examination pressures may lead to "teaching to the test", a falling off in enjoyment of poetry, a closing down of some things that teachers previously valued and a loss of the creative to the analytical' (Benton, 2000, p. 92). Benton's (1984, 1999, 2000) use of questionnaires to investigate teachers' attitudes and beliefs enabled him to form a general picture of where a large group of

teachers stood in relation to poetry teaching. Similarly, Hanratty (2008) used a questionnaire to probe teachers' perceptions of the importance of poetry within the English syllabus, their views on the significance of gender differences in terms of pupils' responses to poetry, their position on the most effective poetry teaching and learning strategies, and their concerns in relation to the teaching of poetry within an assessment culture. In order to understand the conceptions of poetry and poetry writing of 33 enthusiastic teachers, Wilson (2010) used a questionnaire that was distributed as part of in-service training on poetry writing pedagogy. The first part of the questionnaire focused on teachers' conceptions while the second part asked for their perspectives on pedagogical practices, poetry writing, and assessment. Wilson's (2010) study shows that while the personal growth/Romantic tradition is highly influential on teachers' conceptualisations of poetry writing so is their awareness of pupils' needs. His research demonstrates that 'teachers' conceptualisations of poetry writing appear to hold in tension the intuitive and the intentional, the Romantic and the rhetorical' (Wilson, 2010, p. 67). The same questionnaire served as the basis for Wilson's (2013) investigation into the metaphors used by teachers to conceptualise their poetry writing pedagogy. A questionnaire was also used by Collins and Kelly (2013) to study student teachers' attitudes towards poetry and poetry teaching, administering one version at the beginning of the year and another at the end so as to identify possible changes in attitudes after school placement. In my own research it was not necessary to use a questionnaire with teachers since their number was much smaller than those in Benton's (1984, 1999, 2000), Hanratty's (2008), Wilson's (2010, 2013) and Collins and Kelly's (2013) studies. However, just like these researchers, I used a questionnaire for very similar purposes, doing so with my student participants given their fairly big sample size. Like Hanratty (2011), I used the questionnaire to investigate students' impressions of poetry as a genre and their views of how poetry was taught. Unlike him though, I chose to pilot my questionnaire with a group of students similar to my study's participants rather than merely discussing it with fellow teachers before administering it. This was in line with Wagner's (2010) advice that 'Only after the instrument has been piloted and revised should it be administered to actual participants' (p. 29). Moreover, the questionnaire deployed in my study was only one out of a number of means of examining students' attitudes, beliefs and practices.

Despite some researchers' preference for questionnaires, it is common for a combination of interviews and other methods and data sources to be used in poetry education research. In fact, 'bearing in mind the well-known limitations of questionnaires as a research tool' (Benton, 1986, p. 11), Benton (1999) also claims to have used interviews in his research. In an effort to understand whether 'there was a shift in pedagogy from poetry being preferred as part of the English programme to poetry becoming peripheral' (p. 93), O'Neill (2008) complemented surveys she conducted with teachers and students by holding interviews with teachers, student teachers, teacher educators, and students. Kelly and Collins (2013) used semi-structured interviews to develop key themes from the questionnaires that formed part of their study. Likewise, I sought to corroborate my study's survey findings by means of interviews with a selection of students, choosing to interview some of them in a one-to-one manner and others by means of a focus group. I also conducted interviews with teachers and an examiner. Given her interest in the teaching completed over the course of one academic year, Dymoke (2000) used lesson records completed by six teachers to analyse what had been achieved in their poetry lessons. Each teacher was interviewed four times and the interviews built on one another with the third one being conducted immediately after classroom observation. My study did not attempt to chart any development in the participants' attitudes, beliefs and practices but rather sought to get a snapshot of these at the moment when the data was gathered. For this reason one post-observation interview with each participant was sufficient. Brigley's (2010) study sought to explore effective strategies for the teaching of poetry writing. She mostly relied on action research to test the efficacy of a set of such strategies but this was only carried out once she had conducted interviews with four poets who worked with able students, a focus group with six teachers, and interviews with twelve students. The interviews were used as a means of gathering the participants' views and attitudes but Brigley (2010) relied on written notes rather than a transcript. In my study, I chose to record and transcribe all the interviews I conducted because this would provide me with a more accurate representation of what the interviewees had said and would also facilitate coding and analysis. Moreover, the transcript would help to validate the study and establish its trustworthiness. Hennessy and Mannix McNamara (2012) adopted the same approach in their use of interviews as a means of examining students' conceptions of effective poetry teachers. However,

unlike my attempts to triangulate data gathering instruments, they relied exclusively on the data supplied by means of 15-minute interviews with 23 students.

As suggested above, interviews are quite often combined with classroom observation. Just as in my study, Dymoke (2000) conducted one session of classroom observation with each teacher and this allowed her to triangulate her other two methods. Classroom observation also enabled her to develop a 'first hand impression of each teacher's praxis and their working relationships with students as well as a sense of the school environment/physical classroom space in which the teachers operated' (Dymoke, 2000, p. 94). The observation scheme she used consisted of a running description of the lesson as well as comments and questions on what she observed. A thick description of each teacher was constructed by means of interviews, lesson records, observation data, and field diary notes. The observation scheme I used relied primarily on an events checklist to record each lesson I observed. This method was more suited to the needs of my case study since it facilitated comparison amongst lessons and participants mostly in terms of quantitative figures. However, my observation scheme consisted of other elements too and these enabled me to generate some qualitative data. In my observation sessions I chose to adopt a non-participant stance because, like Dymoke (2000), I wanted to avoid the risk of reactivity.

A number of researchers on poetry education have included participants' discussions of poetry as part of their research design, sometimes basing an entire study on this mode of data gathering. Once the full results of Benton's (1984) original study were published as a book in 1986 these contained an analysis of audio recordings of pupils talking about poetry, in this way adding another set of voices to his data and another line of inquiry. His aim was to investigate how pupils would respond to poetry in a small group setting unburdened with the pressure of discussing a poem with their teacher (Benton, 1986). To investigate the processes adopted by second language learners when trying to understand poetry, Hanauer (2001) constructed a situation in which pairs of students discussed Leonard Cohen's poem 'Suzanne Takes You Down'. The pair discussion had 'the advantage of providing a protocol of the participants' considerations while completing the poetry reading task without the cognitive overload and artificiality of verbalizing all their thoughts as in a think-aloud reading exercise' (Hanauer, 2001, p. 299). The discussion was audio recorded and the researcher only intervened to prompt the students if there was a

period of silence. Mattix (2002) criticizes Hanauer's (2001) study for having a 'methodological error, which is due, in part, to the fact that the definition of a language-based task as an activity focusing on interpreting meaning and solving some sort of communication problem is unable to account for the aesthetic value of poetry' (p. 515). Mattix (2002) posits that if Hanauer (2001) had not instructed the participants to understand the poem, the study's results might not have been so categorical and they would have taken into account the affect of poetry. This is because 'While meaning is important in poetry it is not the sole, nor even the primary, objective' (Mattix, 2002, p. 518). Hall (2003) concedes that Hanauer's (2001) study might have led 'students to discuss their "understanding" of a poem, rather than their personal "response" to it', but that this would have happened even without his prompting given that research 'indicates an overwhelmingly negative and analytical experience in which understanding is prioritized by instructors', leading students to 'typically strive after meaning even without any explicit prompting from a researcher' (p. 395). Gordon's (2004, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013) investigation into how children respond to audio recordings of poetry led him to set up classroom activities in which teachers played such recordings and provided students with an opportunity to respond. Thus the audio recordings acted as stimulus resources for students' discussion of the poetry they listened to. Gordon's (2008) application of Conversation Analysis to transcripts of classroom interaction shows that 'pupils often respond to the poetry they hear with enthusiasm, curiosity and attention' (p. 226). His analysis of the transcripts suggests that pupils 'can offer complex responses to the way texts communicate in sound. That they do recognise sound as a carrier of meaning at all…indicates that this curricular shift away from listening to poetry is ill founded' (Gordon, 2009, p. 172). This leads him to conclude that part of the problem with the teaching and learning of poetry is the conception limiting poetry to something that is almost always written and read (Gordon, 2009). Just like in the above studies, my research involved participants discussing a poem. However, unlike some researchers, I refrained from employing think-aloud protocols (e.g. Dias & Hayhoe, 1988; Peskin, 2007) or Conversation Analysis because my purpose in using poetry as a research instrument was not that of evaluating the quality of their response (e.g. Benton, Teasey, Bell, & Hurst, 1988; Hanratty, 2011) or interaction. In addition, I did not reserve this instrument solely for use with my student participants, as was the case with the aforementioned studies. Instead I chose to focus on beefing

up each semi-structured and focus group interview by means of a poem that acted as stimulus material for a more in-depth discussion of every participant's attitudes, beliefs and practices.

Different approaches to data analysis have been employed in poetry education research; however, some recent studies have shown a penchant for techniques associated with grounded theory. In his study of teachers' conceptualisations, Wilson (2010) used Strauss and Corbin's (1990) model of inductive coding to come up with four main themes: language; pedagogy; personal growth; thinking and feeling. While the first two themes were determined by the questions posed, the other two categorized 'responses which were not directly solicited and it is this data which provides the principal empirical foundation for this paper' (Wilson, 2010, p. 59). In his study on teachers' metaphors, Wilson (2013) coded the questionnaire responses iteratively and this process consisted of open coding; grouping clusters thematically; labelling themes; and linking codes to broader themes as a means of describing and summarising the responses. According to him, 'Only once these larger themes had been established was there an attempt to interpret what they might mean in the context of English teaching as a whole and poetry pedagogy in particular' (Wilson, 2013, p. 74). Similarly, an iterative grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1999) was used in Dymoke's (2012) comparative study on the location of poetry in national assessment frameworks in England and New Zealand. Besides looking at examination specifications, marked work and teaching resources, she conducted semi-structured interviews and classroom observations in both countries. She opted for grounded theory when designing her instruments, and collecting and analyzing data because this afforded 'more flexible opportunities for discussion to emerge' (Dymoke, 2012, p. 397). This entailed the initial creation of 'broad questions and topics for discussion' which then led to 'Specific questions and foci for observation [being] generated and refined throughout the data collection period as [she] became immersed in new contexts and practices' (p. 397). The use of an iterative approach led her to identify a number of key themes that in certain cases overlapped (e.g. the location of poetry within national curricula and qualifications in English at post-16 level). Even though I did not consider it prudent to limit myself solely to one specific analytic approach, I found the way Wilson (2010, 2013) and Dymoke (2012) coded their data useful. Despite the fact that in my study most of the codes and themes were determined by the questions and items included in the

different instruments, some others emerged from the data after multiple rounds of reading and analysis. In this sense I sought to employ a balance of deductive and inductive coding as recommended by Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011, p. 218).

3.2 Case Study Research

This study drew upon elements of case study research because it focused on the way poetry is approached by the teachers and students at the biggest post-secondary school in Malta. For Brown and Rodgers (2002), 'Case study research comprises an intensive study of the background, current status, and environmental interactions of a given social unit' (p. 21). In a case study, 'The focus is often on a number of people who work together but have different roles, and the aim is to understand them as a group, with their different but interdependent functions and ways of thinking' (Drever, 2003, p. 7). This case study attempted to understand teachers' and students' attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry and poetry teaching. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), 'Case studies can establish cause and effect, indeed one of their strengths is that they observe effects in real contexts, recognising that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects' (p. 253). This idea is particularly pertinent to this study since one of its main purposes was that of developing a clearer picture of the relationship between the way the participants approach poetry at school and their attitudes and beliefs.

   One of the possible advantages of case studies is that 'They begin in a world of action and contribute to it. Their insights may be directly interpreted and put to use; for staff or individual self-development, for within-institutional feedback; for formative evaluation; and in educational policy-making' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 256). It is hoped that by seeking to explain the relationship between the participants' attitudes, beliefs and practices, this study will lead to some form of re-evaluation of the current situation in post-secondary poetry education in Malta and beyond. One of the disadvantages of case studies 'is the possibility that the presence of the research can lead to *the observer effect*' (Denscombe, 2010, p. 63). In this study I introduced a number of measures to mitigate the repercussions of such an effect (see 3.6.1). Another 'common concern about case studies is that they provide little basis for scientific generalization' (Yin, 2009, p. 15). However, given that case studies 'are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes' (Yin, 2009, p. 15), by means of this study I did not presume I could generalise about all

post-secondary teachers and students of poetry in Malta and abroad. Nonetheless, one of the main values of this case study lies in the fact that it underscores the significance of investigating the interplay between attitudes, beliefs and practices in poetry education in post-secondary school contexts.

3.3 Mixed Methods Approach

This study triangulated qualitative and quantitative forms of data gathering methods for the purpose of cross-examining results and providing a more holistic picture of the research object. Triangulation is 'The most common and well-known approach to mixing methods' (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 62). For Gorard and Taylor (2004) 'The methods should be complementary, producing different aspects of the reality under investigation and then put together' (p. 46). Case studies 'involve looking at a case or phenomenon in its real-life context, usually employing many types of data' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 254). Stotsky and Mall (2003) indicate that 'more and more studies on the English language arts today use both qualitative and quantitative methods' (p. 137). Calfee and Chambliss (2003) add that 'virtually all significant educational problems call for a mix of methods, and all require rigorous conceptualization and creative design' (p. 152). Mixed methods research has the following advantages:

- Increasing the strengths while eliminating the weaknesses
- Multi-level analysis of complex issues
- Improved validity
- Reaching multiple audiences (Dörnyei, 2007, pp. 45-46)

A mixed methods approach has the benefit of 'combining different data sources and methods of analysis in the interests of completeness of description, greater accuracy and sensitivity of interpretation' (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 232). Triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods 'allows the opportunity of greater credibility and greater plausibility of interpretation', and 'aids validity' (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 71) (see 3.4.2 and 3.4.3). Newby (2014) points out that triangulation 'is less concerned with the accuracy of measurement than it is with the correctness of the insight and the legitimacy of the interpretation' (p. 134). In the present study this entailed employing data and methodological triangulation (Brown & Rodgers, 2002, p. 244) for the purpose of forming a more

complete understanding of the way poetry is approached in class and of the attitudes and beliefs that influence such an approach.

Case studies are 'methodologically eclectic, with a number of permutations and possibilities for choice' (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 207). A mixed methods approach was adopted in this study because as Casanave (2010) explains 'The point in a case study is to come to know the case well, thoroughly, and from different perspectives. Any data that contribute to this effort are included' (p. 70). She indicates that as part of the case study tradition different research methods may be adopted, however, qualitative data are 'typically collected over time, in some depth, and from a limited number of people and settings' (Casanave, 2010, p. 70). In Newby's (2014) opinion mixed methods research is appropriate when one wants to go 'beyond showing cause and effect to understand how the cause creates the effect' and when one wants to get 'to grips with complex issues involving the interplay of behaviour, attitudes, culture and values' (p. 136). Such an approach was particularly suited to this study given that it focused on the relationship between attitudes and beliefs, and practices. By means of a mixed methods approach I wanted to understand how attitudes and beliefs in relation to poetry and pedagogy mediate classroom practices.

One of the challenges of a mixed methods approach is the possibility that 'the conclusions reached from the various components of the design are incompatible' (Hall, 2008, p. 124). I sought to minimise this problem by adequately piloting the tools and crosschecking the yielded data. Nonetheless, rather than just seeking to confirm the data yielded by the different instruments, this study also attempted to highlight differences where necessary. The fact that the use of different instruments sometimes led to a discrepancy in which attitudes, beliefs and practices were foregrounded meant that I had to understand the cause for such a discrepancy and see how it provided me with a more holistic picture. Barbour (2007) explains that 'a combination of methods produces parallel data, which should be used to illuminate differences in focus or emphasis, rather than being prized for their capacity to corroborate findings produced using various methods of generating data' (p. 41). Triangulation is advantageous because 'Not only does it provide a more balanced picture, it can also help to explain things that seem to contradict or not support each other. It also allows us to get rounded perspectives from all the people involved' (Burns, 2010, p. 97). In carrying out this study I considered such contradictions to be

as important as the identical findings generated by different instruments. This was an example of how I sought to address potential problems in this study's design. Other considerations having to do with the methodological challenges of this study are discussed in the next section.

3.4 Methodological Challenges

The mixed methods design of this study helped to address some of challenges that usually affect studies that employ solely one mode of investigation. However, in conducting the study I remained conscious of the need to safeguard the key principles outlined below.

3.4.1 Engaging in Reflexivity

For Derrida (1967/1978), 'in poetry, as in literature, verbal representation purloins scenic representation' (p. 300). Following on from the Saussurean critique of the Adamic conception of language, Derrida (1967/1978), Foucault (1969/1972) and other post-structuralist and postmodernist thinkers show how language does not represent reality as one sees the world represented in a mirror but that reality is constructed through the use of language. Their ideas helped engender 'the crisis of representation' in the social sciences and in '(re)defining the role of the researcher' (Hatch, 1996, pp. 359-360). They led to the notion of reflexivity, which is considered to be 'the key virtue in research' (Hammersley, 2004, p. 934) and 'is usually associated with a critical reflection on the practice and process of research and the role of the researcher' (Lichtman, 2010, p. 121). Reflexivity involves 'a conscious use of reflection to examine one's own personal biases, views, and motivations to develop self-awareness in interaction with others' (Powell, 2006, p. 36). Moreover, reflexivity 'requires a purposefully carved space to attempt to sit back and question our place as one who asks questions and attempts to answer them' (Bryant, 2015, p. 1). This is fundamental given the researcher's role in gathering and interpreting evidence, all the time using language to engage in worldmaking (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2015). Given my deep immersion in the research context, reflexivity was especially important for me. It entailed remaining continuously aware of my dual role as a teacher and a researcher studying my own teaching context, colleagues and students. It also meant being constantly vigilant of my role in constructing an interpretation of that reality via language.

In order to mitigate the effects of my presence and personal biases on the findings, whilst conducting this study I sought to be aware of my own role as a teacher and researcher studying a highly familiar context. Wragg (1999) points out that 'Self-evaluation…undertaken with an open mind rather than defensively' can shield researchers studying their own school from the accusation that they are viewing events 'through a distorted lens, having only their own perceptions, experiences and prejudices on which to draw' (p. 128). It is partly for this reason that I adopted a variety of means by which to safeguard the validity and trustworthiness of this study (see 3.4.2 and 3.4.3). Simpson and Tuson (2003) advise researchers to keep in mind their 'role and the relationships within the whole situation' (p. 54) while Maxwell (2005) states that 'Explaining your possible biases and how you will deal with these is a key task' (p. 108), something I do later in this section and in my discussion of the findings (see Chapter 5). Given that 'eliminating the *actual* influence of the researcher is impossible…the goal in a qualitative study is not to eliminate this influence, but to understand it and to use it productively' (Maxwell, 2005, pp. 108-109). In fact, this influence played a crucial role in allowing me to gain the participants' trust in order to be able to gather most of the data. For example, most of my research participants had no experience of classroom observation or research interviews but, despite being somewhat sceptical at first, they eventually consented to both because they knew me either as their colleague or their teacher.

This study relied on such research instruments as classroom observation and interviews (see 3.6, 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9). Their use usually compels researchers to 'reflect on their own positioning and subjectivity in the research and provide an explicit, situated account of their own role in the project and its influences over the findings' (Starfield, 2010, p. 54). This is particularly important given that one of the effects of postmodernism is the development of the idea that 'the outcomes of the research will always be influenced by the researcher's beliefs' (Holliday, 2010, p. 99). Barbour (2007) explains that when 'used to provide another window on the research encounter and the resulting data, "reflexivity" in terms of critically examining the nature and impact of research relations can be a valuable tool in analysis' (p. 49). In fact, Coulter and Smith (2009) remark that 'Knowledge is constructed through transactions among researchers, participants, evidence, and the social context' (p. 588). Given that interview transcripts or observation field notes are not on their own sufficient to validate a case study, researchers need to adopt the

view which 'recognises that we cannot eliminate researcher bias or the influence of researchers on participants and settings, but that we can openly acknowledge that bias in our interpretations and writing' (Casanave, 2010, p. 73). Duff (2007) indicates that 'an explicit account by researchers…about their own role or history in a project and unanticipated influences over the findings are expected' (p. 978). Such an account demonstrates an awareness on the part of researchers that they 'are themselves participants or instruments as well as learners in projects, who should not pretend to be dispassionate, arms-length, impersonal, and invisible research agents' (Duff, 2007, p. 978). This is what I hope to show by means of the details below.

My interest in this project stemmed partly from the fact that for many years I have been engrossed with poetry as an art form. As part of my academic development I have explored such issues as the role of poetry vis-à-vis politics (Xerri, 2010a), and poetry as a healing device (Xerri, 2010b). I have also conducted studies on the ramifications of a cognitively and linguistically inappropriate poetry anthology on academically weak students (Xerri & Agius, 2005), and on the effects of methodology and assessment practices on candidates' performance in the MC English examination (Xerri, 2009). I have also produced a number of publications on poetry education, including articles discussing poetry pedagogy (Xerri, 2011, 2012a, 2012c, 2012d, 2013b, 2013c, 2014a, 2015a; Xerri & Xerri Agius, 2015), poets' views on poetry teaching (Xerri, 2012b, 2014c, 2014d), and the influence of assessment and shared attitudes and beliefs on the way poetry is approached in class (Xerri, 2013a, in press-b, in press-d).

To some extent the idea for the present study owes its genesis to anecdotal evidence gathered in the course of my teaching career at Junior College as well as throughout my years as an MC English student at the same institution. During informal discussions with students and teachers I realised that students most often fail to engage with poetry and that they consider this subject to be their least preferred reading genre. Interviews carried out with teachers as part of a previous study (Xerri, 2009) also showed that teachers at Junior College tend to maximise the importance of teacher talk during their lessons. The latter study also showed that methodology and assessment practices were partly to blame for students' poor performance in the MC English examination over a five-year period. The above academic and professional experiences helped shape my assumptions about the reasons for which teachers and students approach poetry in the way they do during lessons.

Notwithstanding such assumptions, in this study I was acutely aware of the need to 'submit to the data in such a way that the unexpected is allowed to emerge and perhaps change the direction of the research' (Holliday, 2010, pp. 100-101). It is partly because of this reason that in this study I adopted the omniscient viewpoint as outlined by Hatch (1996). This viewpoint 'is potent because it offers the narrator the flexibility to move between internal and external perspectives and to use the variety of voices available…so that the best communicative strategy for a particular idea can be exploited' (Hatch, 1996, p. 366). The omniscient viewpoint has the 'advantages of flexibility and interpretive openness' and 'provides the further option of mixing objective and subjective reflexivity' (Hatch, 1996, p. 371). For these reasons I considered it to be the most suited narrative position for this study. It partly entailed reporting the views of the different participants in their own words as far as possible and checking my interpretation of their beliefs and practices with them. This helps to ensure validity, which is the subject of the next section.

3.4.2 Ensuring Validity

Given that 'the key threats to the usefulness of case study research are the threats to internal and external validity' (Brown & Rodgers, 2002, p. 44), this study put in place a number of measures to safeguard validity. With regards to the problematic concept of external validity, 'Here the question is whether the researcher can legitimately generalise from the case study participant(s) and situation to other people and situations' (Brown & Rodgers, 2002, p. 45). Even though one of the main strengths of case study research is that it 'provide[s] insights into other, similar situations and cases, thereby assisting interpretation of other similar cases', case study 'results may not be generalisable' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 256). Despite the fact that the results may not possess the generalisability of positivist research, Stake (1995) claims that 'It may be useful to try to select cases which are typical or representative of other cases' (p. 4). This study seeks to ensure that the subjects that constitute this case study are 'typical of those about whom we wish to generalise' (Best & Kahn, 1989, p. 92), that is, other teachers and students of poetry at large post-secondary institutions like Junior College. However, by being affiliated with the University of Malta, and by having specific enrolment criteria for its students and recruitment criteria for its staff, Junior College has its own distinct identity which makes it somewhat different from other post-secondary institutions in Malta and

abroad (see 1.2.3). Casanave (2010) affirms that case study research is 'an approach in which the object of inquiry is unique (in the sense of singular) and bounded and in which the researcher's interest is in the particular rather than the general' (p. 66). For her, 'depth and detail are essential in a good case study' and usually the researcher is primarily 'interested in the particulars of what makes the case special, not necessarily what makes it representative of larger processes or groups of people' (Casanave, 2010, p. 67). Nonetheless, such research may still 'have *resonance* in other teaching contexts' (Burns, 2010, p. 95) and it is this resonance that provides a means of gauging this study's external validity. It is to a large extent connected to how I attempted to provide the study with a degree of transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) (see 3.4.3).

This study seeks to provide its audience with 'an accurate and comprehensive picture of the participants and the situations in which the study took place' and it refrains from reporting 'only hypothesis-confirming data' (Brown & Rodgers, 2002, p. 44). This is significant because when it comes to internal validity one needs to question whether 'the researchers have really observed what they set out to observe and have reported all the critical observational data, or just samples that most strongly support their hypotheses' (Brown & Rodgers, 2002, p. 44). Case studies 'are not easily open to cross-checking, hence they may be selective, biased, personal and subjective' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 256). For these reasons, this study adopted a number of elements taken from Maxwell's (2005) validity checklist: intensive, long-term involvement in the field; detailed and varied data; respondent validation; acknowledgement of researcher's intervention; searching for discrepant instances; data triangulation; using quasi-statistics (pp. 110-113). These elements play a crucial role in my discussion of the findings and some of them are also essential in establishing the study's trustworthiness, which is discussed in the next section.

3.4.3 Establishing Trustworthiness

Due to the 'crisis of legitimation' (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, p. 618), the positivist standards of validity, generalisability and reliability are not strictly applicable to the qualitative aspects of mixed methods research. Hence the concept of trustworthiness, as 'a broader notion of truth value' (Ridenour & Newman, 2008, p. 37), is considered fundamental. For Ely (1991), 'Being trustworthy as a qualitative researcher means at least that the processes of the research are carried out fairly, that the products

represent as closely as possible the experiences of the people who are studied' (p. 93). According to Eisenhart (2006), 'the trustworthiness of the research depends on evidence that the researcher was, in fact, there and did directly participate in the scenes of action' (p. 573). This study's trustworthiness merges these definitions by being based on four main criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

As a 'substitute' for internal validity, *credibility* involves two tasks: conducting 'the inquiry in such a way that the probability that the findings will be found to be credible is enhanced'; and having the findings 'approved by the constructors of the multiple realities being studied' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296), that is, the research participants themselves. The kind of triangulation of sources and methods used in this study is one way of increasing the credibility of a research project, but this also depends on the researcher's 'Prolonged engagement' with a site so as to 'detect and take account of distortions that might otherwise creep into the data' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 302). Junior College was chosen as a case study because the fact that I teach there allowed me to capitalise on my knowledge of the context, provided me with better access to the participants, and the opportunity to build trust with them. In this sense it adheres to Stake's (1995) idea that when selecting a case study 'The first criterion should be to maximise what we can learn' (p. 4). Moreover, according to Munn and Drever (2004),

> One of the strengths of practitioners researching their own practice or school policy is that they already know a good deal about the school, the subject department, the staff, and the pupils. These are areas which an outside researcher needs to spend time becoming familiar with. (p. 3)

My familiarity with the research context and participants allowed me to be aware of whether the act of positioning myself as a researcher in order to conduct the study was impinging on the data. Moreover, the use of member checking helped me to confirm that the data was not heavily affected by my influence.

Member checking is another means of establishing credibility and it involves asking the research participants to react to the data, interpretations and conclusions. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) explain that 'members' feedback is very valuable and sometimes helps us see or emphasize something we missed' (p. 147). Member checking is 'heralded as a critical aspect of establishing trustworthiness and meeting

the criteria of validity, credibility and believability' (Hallett, 2013, p. 30). In this study, the participants were given the opportunity of examining and commenting on interview transcripts, observation schemes, and the completed study. Their comments helped shape my discussion of the findings (see Chapter 5). For example, it was necessary to check my interpretation of the participants' use of certain aesthetic terms so as to verify a common understanding of them.

As discussed above, external validity via generalisability is a problematic concept within the parameters of qualitative research; hence *transferability* is a more appropriate notion. This entails 'the extent to which findings from a qualitative study are useful in understanding how people experience the target phenomenon in other settings or under other conditions' (Monsen & Van Horn, 2008, p. 74). Transferability can be established by providing 'the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316). Dawson (2010) explains that the 'aim' of thick description

> is to tell as much as can be discerned through interaction and observation, giving voice to the views and stories of research participants, but always mediated by the interpretive lens brought to the telling by the researcher and the circumstances in which the research is being carried out. (p. 943)

In this study I sought to achieve this aim by using different data sources and methods to create a detailed account of the way teachers and students at Junior College approach poetry.

This study used purposeful sampling because this is a means of 'providing the widest possible range of information for inclusion in the thick description' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316). Purposeful sampling involves 'the selection of information-rich cases for in-depth study' (Fletcher & Plakoyiannaki, 2010, p. 837). A case study 'usually requires a relatively small number of respondents to yield the saturated and rich data that is needed to understand even subtle meanings in the phenomenon under focus' (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 127). The purposeful sampling strategy used in this study was that of homogenous sampling, which 'allows us to conduct an in-depth analysis to identify common patterns in a group with similar characteristics' (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 127). The chosen participants were all involved in the teaching and assessment of

poetry at Junior College, as teachers, students, or as the chief examiner and syllabus developer for MC English.

In qualitative research *dependability* is the 'substitute criterion for reliability' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 299) and it concerns the consistency of a study's results. Just as for credibility, dependability can be improved by means of member checking and triangulation (Brown & Rodgers, 2002, p. 242). Moreover, these two techniques are also significant for the purpose of establishing *confirmability*, which consists of 'the degree to which qualitative results are or could be corroborated' (Brown & Rodgers, 2002, p. 242). Confirmability can also be enhanced by means of an audit trail, which 'allows you to walk people through your work, from beginning to end, so that they can understand the path you took and judge the trustworthiness of your outcomes' (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 146). An audit trail builds trustworthiness through transparency because it allows others 'to scrutinize your work and the evidence used to support your findings and conclusions' (Yin, 2011, p. 19). In this study the audit trail is constituted by all the documentation and data amassed as part of the research process (included in the appendices). The next few sections' discussion of how the research instruments were developed and piloted, and how the data was analysed contributes to the audit trail as well.

3.5 Survey Questionnaire

A questionnaire (Appendix 10) was incorporated into the research design as a means of gauging students' attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry and the study of poetry. The questionnaire was distributed to all the students enrolled on the MC English course at Junior College. One of the attractions of using a questionnaire was the fact that it gives researchers the opportunity 'to gather information that learners are able to report about themselves, such as their beliefs and motivations about learning or their reactions to learning and classroom instruction and activities' (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 77). However, I was also aware that questionnaires tend to 'provide a rather "thin" description of the target phenomena' (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 115) and are characterised 'by the possible unsophistication and limited scope of the data that are collected' as well as 'the likely limited flexibility of response' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 317). The main downside is that 'data derived from questionnaires often provide only a superficial assessment of sometimes very complex constructs' (Wagner, 2010, p. 26). I sought to counteract these problems by combining the

questionnaire with semi-structured and focus group interviews, both of which have the capacity to provide rich data.

Questionnaires are usually designed to provide three kinds of information about the respondent: factual, behavioural, and attitudinal (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 5). The first item in this study's questionnaire asked for bio-data information whereas the rest was made up of selected-response items and open-ended questions focusing on beliefs and practices. McDonough and McDonough (1997) advise researchers 'to choose a mix of question types that will maximise the range and detail of the information elicited' (p. 177). That is why the questionnaire contained different kinds of questions, including multiple-choice, dichotomous, rank ordering and open-ended questions. One of the questions was in the form of a four-point Likert scale, which is 'generally useful for getting at respondents' views, judgements, or opinions' (Brown & Rodgers, 2002, p. 120). A four-point scale was used since this demands a stronger level of commitment on the respondents' part than that entailed by a more finely tuned five-point scale giving the 'No Opinion' option. Newby (2014) claims that 'when a mid-point is inserted, there is evidence that responses can gravitate towards it because there is comfort in the average and it is easier to check it rather than think deeply about the issue and decide on which side you sit' (p. 308). For similar reasons, the 'Don't Know' option was not inserted in the selected-response items that formed part of the questionnaire. Some researchers indicate that 'if many of the participants choose this category, the results of the overall survey often will not reach statistical significance' (Wagner, 2010, p. 27). Newby (2014) describes it as 'a lazy option for some respondents' (p. 314). Open-ended questions were used whenever I was not aware of all the possible answers that respondents might come up with. According to Dörnyei (2007), 'By permitting greater freedom of expression, open-format items can provide a far greater richness than fully quantitative data', however, they 'work particularly well if they are not completely open but contain certain guidance' (p. 107). That is why the questionnaire contains clarification questions and sentence completion items. It was kept at a maximum of four pages because of the suggestion that anything much longer than that would be a heavy imposition on the respondents (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 110).

The questionnaire was used to survey the entire MC English student population at Junior College, which in the academic year 2011-2012 stood at 376 students (96 males and 280 females). By choosing to include the whole target

population in the survey, I felt I could 'speak with certainty about their answers' (Munn & Drever, 2004, p. 19). Given my proximity to the target population, I was also able to personally administer the questionnaire. I chose to do this because I wanted 'to get standardised information by offering everyone the same stimulus', especially since 'the spoken presentation and the attitude of the presenter can have a marked effect on how questionnaires are completed' (Munn & Drever, 2004, pp. 35-36). When the researcher takes on responsibility for questionnaire administration this 'leads to a higher response rate and better results' (Wagner, 2010, p. 30). In order to minimise non-response bias as much as possible, I provided students who were absent during the administering of the questionnaire with a copy upon their return to school and invited them to complete it.

The questionnaire yielded a substantial amount of numerical data, which was subsequently analysed statistically. Spreadsheets were used 'to translate the "raw" data' (Munn & Drever, 2004, p. 40). Close-ended questions were pre-coded by means of numbers and letters and this was in line with the suggestion that 'a coding frame is generally developed before the interviewing commences so that is can be printed into the questionnaire itself' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 348). In the case of open-ended questions, the coding frame was developed by examining a sample of responses and calculating a frequency tally, upon which the validity of the coding frame was checked further by coding a larger sample (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 348). This method is in line with the recommendation to analyse open-ended questions 'by describing the trends, themes or patterns of ideas you find in them' (Burns, 2010, p. 85). The main advantage of using categories derived from the data rather than pre-set categories is that one avoids the risk of imposing one's interests on the data (Munn & Drever, 2004, p. 45). When coding both closed and open questions missing answers were taken into account, as were answers that clearly showed the respondents' disregard or misinterpretation of the instructions.

3.5.1 Piloting the Questionnaire

When designing the questionnaire a number of recommendations put forward by the literature were taken into account, especially in relation to writing questions that match the respondents' vocabulary and ideas, making questions concise and straightforward, and having one issue per question (Newby, 2014). The wording of the questions is particularly important when 'assessing non-factual matters such as

the respondents' attitudes, beliefs and other personal or mental variables' (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 103). In the piloting phase, the aim was 'to increase the reliability, validity and practicability of the questionnaire' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 341) by checking whether it was 'relatively easy to answer, easy to record and evaluate, user-friendly and unambiguous' (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 177). In line with Brown and Rodgers's (2002) recommendation to 'pilot the survey instrument with participants similar to the ones you will eventually be surveying' (p. 143), the questionnaire was piloted with a group of 42 students attending an MC English course at a post-secondary institution similar to Junior College. The gender distribution of the respondents was in the form of 32 female and 10 male students. Following Newby's (2014) advice 'to sit with respondents as they complete the questionnaire and ask them to comment on the questions as they answer them' (p. 335), I chose to personally administer the questionnaire to the respondents in small groups so as to get an opportunity of tackling and making a note of their difficulties.

By piloting the questionnaire with a group of students who were 'sympathetic…but willing to give forthright comments and sharp criticism' (Munn & Drever, 2004, p. 35), I was able to make a number of adjustments to ambiguous and misleading terms and phrases. For example, in three particular questions the respondents were asked to indicate the effectiveness of their teacher's method when teaching the set text and the literary criticism of poetry, and when conducting a poetry tutorial. The design of these questions was somewhat problematic, primarily because of the issue of 'effectiveness'. Noticing that some of the respondents had problems interpreting the term 'effective', I asked them to orally explain to me what they considered to be effective or not. Most of the respondents claimed that an effective method of teaching the set text is one in which they are provided with plenty of notes and background information. However, during seminars and tutorials a teacher's method is considered effective if students are allowed to 'participate' and voice their views about the poem in question. Therefore I decided to replace the term 'effective' with the less ambiguous 'useful'. Another problem presented by these three questions consisted of the ambiguity surrounding the 'Somewhat effective' category. Even though this category can be interpreted as neutral, during my analysis of the data I tended to associate it with the negative categories rather than with the positive ones given that on its own it was not telling me anything about the respondents' opinion. As mentioned above, a mid-point category attracts a lot of

attention because many respondents find it comfortable not having to take a definite stand on a particular issue (Newby, 2014). The data showed that this was certainly the case with seminars and tutorials and when I questioned them about their choice the respondents themselves conceded that this was somewhat true. Hence I decided to omit the mid-point category from the revised questionnaire.

In some cases, changes had to be made to the format of certain items. For example, in another set of three questions the respondents were asked whether they would like to see any changes in their set text lectures, literary criticism poetry seminars, and poetry tutorials. A number of respondents merely answered affirmatively or negatively and failed to elaborate. Hence it was decided to change these three items into binary questions and provide adequate space for the respondents to write down reasons for their choice of answer.

Besides serving as an opportunity for redrafting some of the items, the pilot was also an avenue for data crosschecking. I found that the attitudes towards poetry recorded by means of the questionnaire were to a large extent also highlighted by the student interview guide, topic guide, and stimulus material. This is in line with the idea that the best way of assessing the validity of an instrument is by comparing its results with the data yielded by other instruments (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 179). For example, the survey respondents' appreciation of a lecturing approach during lessons on the set text and a desire for more interaction during seminars and tutorials also emerged during the analysis of the data generated by the other instruments. This means that the findings generated by means of the different instruments in most cases corroborated each other. Moreover, in completing the questionnaire the respondents answered the questions in a consistent fashion, that is, the data yielded by one particular item verified that produced by other questions. For example, the percentage registered in relation to student satisfaction with the activities they do during their literary criticism poetry seminars is in line with the results yielded by the question on the respondents' evaluation of a teacher's methodology during such seminars, and the question on the respondents' enjoyment of said seminars.

3.6 Classroom Observation

In this study I used classroom observation as a means of evaluating the approach that teachers and students adopt in a poetry lesson. Allwright (1988) champions a 'faith in

the observable' (p. 239). He affirms that a study that lacks an observational component suffers from an 'interpretation problem' (Allwright, 1988, p. 254). Simpson and Tuson (2003) call it 'one of the most versatile ways of gathering information' (p. 3) while Dörnyei (2007) affirms that 'observation is fundamentally different from questioning because it provides direct information rather than self-report accounts' (p. 178). Gillham (2008) claims that it is the act of observing what people '*actually* do' that gives the method its 'overpowering claim to validity' (p. 1). The argument for using classroom observation is that 'we have plenty of evidence that what we see influences our judgements more than what we hear' (Newby, 2014, p. 347). Given that data consisting of behaviours and events can best be collected by means of classroom observation (Holliday, 2010, p. 100), this instrument played a fundamental role in this study's exploration of poetry education. Classroom observation was the main means of identifying what occurs in a poetry lesson.

Classroom observation is 'at the heart of both understanding professional practice and improving its quality' (Wragg, 1999, p. 17). Some of its strengths consist of the fact that it provides the researcher with 'permanent and systematic records of social interactions' and that it 'can enrich and supplement data gathered by other techniques' (Simpson & Tuson, 2003, p. 16). Among its characteristics is the fact that it takes place in a naturalistic setting (i.e. a classroom) and that it presents the researcher with a holistic viewpoint (Newby, 2014, pp. 350-351) by means of the opportunity to observe what takes place in the setting. Notwithstanding the uniqueness of each research context, Newby (2014) affirms that 'What we have to do as researchers is demonstrate that out of our unique observations there is something that is meaningful for and relevant to other contexts' (p. 351). However, Harbon and Shen (2010) warn that the data gathered by means of classroom observation 'really just portrays snapshots of limited periods of time. The conclusions drawn are thus tentative and at best can be taken as indicative rather than conclusive' (p. 280). Despite the fact that my use of classroom observation provided me with a snapshot of the main events that occur in a poetry lesson, this instrument was crucial in allowing me to form a more complete picture of the participants' approach to poetry in class. In this sense it complemented and crosschecked the teachers' and students' own descriptions of poetry lessons in the interviews. A study that uses classroom observation is not primarily concerned with generalisable findings and hence most often the sample is quite small and 'chosen…to be appropriate for the purposes of the

study, rather than randomly' (Simpson & Tuson, 2003, p. 26). In this study, classroom observation was a crucial means of forming a fuller picture of the praxis of the poetry teachers and students at Junior College when shut inside their classrooms.

The kind of classroom observation used in this study was overt and non-participant, a role that Newby (2014) labels as 'Inactive and known' (p. 352). Since these observation sessions were conducted at the school where I teach, both the students and the teachers obviously knew me. My presence in the classroom might have impacted on each observed lesson but I sought to diminish this by being as unobtrusive as possible. By sitting in a corner of the room and refraining from participating, I focused on observing each lesson in as inconspicuous a manner as possible to minimise reactivity. I was not granted permission to video record the lessons, however, in spite of the fact that 'video data is obviously richer…the video recording process is much more difficult and obtrusive' (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 139). Observation by individuals other than myself was not possible given that it was already very hard for me to be granted permission to conduct classroom observation and practically impossible to negotiate entry into the field for other observers. This means that one of the limitations of my classroom observation sessions is its lack of inter-rater reliability. I sought to offset the effects of this limitation by means of method triangulation and member checking.

Every teacher was observed conducting one 60-minute literary criticism poetry seminar and the data was collected by means of an observation scheme that included a number of instruments (see 3.6.3). After each classroom observation session the teacher in question took part in a semi-structured interview that was conducted in a one-to-one manner (see 3.7). The interview partly served the purpose of clarifying a number of observed lesson events.

I chose to observe seminars rather than set text lectures because of the idea that during a seminar students should be given the opportunity to develop critical thinking and the ability to engage in argumentation; one of the teacher's roles during such a lesson is that of listening (Nicholls, 2002, p. 89). My experience of the A-level poetry classroom is at odds with the notion that students in post-secondary education are used to a style of teaching 'based on a relatively intimate, interactive discussion group' (Amigoni & Sanders, 2003, p. 75). Moreover, the pilot study indicated that students were largely dissatisfied with what went on during seminars rather than lectures (see A44.7.2). They seemed accustomed to listening to a lecture without

having to intervene but in a seminar they expected to be actively engaged in the reading and discussion of poetry. By means of classroom observation I sought to understand which events were most frequent in the participants' poetry seminars.

3.6.1 Observer's Paradox

One of the challenges I faced whilst conducting the classroom observation sessions forming part of this study was that of reactivity, which is considered to be a threat to validity (Maxwell, 2005, p. 108). The researcher's presence in the classroom is a 'distortion from normality' and thus 'It is incumbent on the teacher researcher to satisfy himself or herself that any distortion is evaluated and taken account of', otherwise there is the risk that it 'could invalidate the observations as a true picture of what normally occurs' (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 110). Wragg (1999) asserts that 'Teachers and indeed pupils may attempt to provide what they think the visitor expects, and this will vary according to the impression or stereotype they form of the observer concerned' (p. 15). Non-participant observers need to 'be as unobtrusive as possible…a "fly-on-the-wall"' (Simpson & Tuson, 2003, p. 55). However, Dörnyei (2007) admits that 'It is a real challenge in most situations to find ways of minimising the intrusion so that classroom events are as natural and unstaged as possible while we are present' (p. 190). I tried to bank on the fact that the participants knew me well in order to make them feel more at ease whilst being observed. Given that classroom observation is a highly intrusive data-collection technique, I sought to reduce the level of discomfort for the observed teachers by reassuring them that they would have an opportunity of examining the completed observation scheme after the session (Simpson & Tuson, 2003, p. 61). This obviously did not make me completely unobtrusive but my intention was to somewhat allay any anxiety on the teachers' part and thus lead to as realistic a set of events as possible.

Moreover, the fact that this study employed method triangulation meant that the effects of observer's paradox (including Hawthorne and halo effects) on the findings could be adequately evaluated. This is because any discrepancies between what I observed and the way the participants described classroom activities in the interviews could be noted. Moreover, teacher researchers studying their own context 'have an built-in advantage' since 'they are always in a sense "participant" or at least "privileged" observers because they are an organic part of the institutional environment' (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 116). My knowledge of the

context and of the participants allowed me to identify any events that might be considered a result of reactivity.

3.6.2 Observer's Bias

Another challenge I encountered whilst carrying out the classroom observation sessions was this method's 'susceptibility to observer bias' (Simpson & Tuson, 2003, p. 18). According to Hatch (1996), 'Bias introduced by the act of observation is inescapable…but not unknowable' (p. 360). It can best be dealt with by being open about one's assumptions and discussing these with colleagues: 'Such discussions will help to remind you of the different ways things might be viewed and so reduce bias in your approach' (Simpson & Tuson, 2003, p. 18). The researcher is advised to 'check your interpretation of your observations with that of…the teacher whose class you were observing, and reflect on the implications of the differences between your account of events and that of others' (Simpson & Tuson, 2003, p. 19). Given that the validity of a study is related to its credibility in the eyes of its original participants (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 63), in this study the above advice was put into practice when I showed the completed observation scheme to the observed teachers.

Discussing my interpretation of lesson events with the observed teachers facilitated the process of '"making familiar things strange", or in other words, seeing things that are before our eyes in ways we haven't consciously noticed before' (Burns, 2010, p. 57). Wragg (1999) points out that even though researchers studying their own teaching context 'can sometimes find it difficult to detach themselves from their own prior knowledge, beliefs, commitments and prejudices about a place they know very well and have seen every day for years', at the same time they 'often understand the significance of events that might elude strangers' (p. 15). In conjunction with this, Angrosino (2007) explains that even when doing observation in a familiar setting 'the researcher may go through a phase of "shock" just because he or she is interacting with that setting in the role of researcher' (p. 58). In this study my efforts to look at 'the classroom from a stranger's point of view' (Holliday, 2010, p. 101) complemented another 'valuable source of validating evidence – the views of the participants under observation' (Simpson & Tuson, 2003, p. 65). These two techniques were a means of heightening the validity and trustworthiness of this particular research method, which is considered further in the next section.

3.6.3 Observation Scheme

In this study I used an observation scheme (Appendix 11) that consisted of a combination of quantitative and qualitative instruments. Harbon and Shen (2010) affirm that 'Whichever strategies and techniques are chosen for classroom observation research, it is important that the researcher has a tightly structured and systematic data gathering instrumentation' (p. 278). Structured and unstructured techniques 'represent points on a graded scale' and 'the extremes can be used in combination to complement each other' (Gillham, 2008, p. 5); actually 'in practice usually some combination of the two approaches takes place' (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 179). In this study I primarily used a structured approach to classroom observation but complemented this with elements typical of analytical observation.

The use of an events checklist is considered to be a form of structured observation, which 'implies planning and the use of some previously established categories' as well as 'prior decisions about what to record' (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 105). A researcher who uses a checklist 'is ultimately interested in what the observable behaviour tells him about something deeper: the aspect of learning or teaching under study' (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 107). When using a checklist it means 'that you are clear in advance of undertaking your observations exactly what categories of variable you wish to investigate', however, a researcher also needs to be open to 'unexpected patterns…suggested by the data' (Simpson & Tuson, 2003, p. 68). The main benefit of an events checklist is that it allows the researcher to form 'an objective picture of the patterns of activities occurring in a classroom and to identify how well they relate to a particular, or desired, teaching approach' (Burns, 2010, p. 65). Such a method 'makes the process more reliable and produces results that are comparable across classrooms and over time' (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 185). I used an events checklist because I wanted to form a clear picture of the occurrence of a specific set of lesson events across the different observed sessions and to be able to make the necessary comparisons.

An events checklist with time sampling was used because this method 'gives a chronological representation of the flow of the whole class, that is, the distribution of the particular phenomenon throughout the class' (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 180). Interval recording of every one-minute interval was used since 'this enables frequencies to be calculated, simple patterns to be observed and an approximate sequence of events to be noted' (Cohen et al., 2007. p. 402). The categories forming part of the checklist

were based on the insights derived from the literature on poetry education. For instance, the analytical descriptions of poetry lessons found in certain studies (e.g. Dymoke, 2000) served the purpose of enabling me to focus on a set of lesson events. In addition, coding schemes by Flanders (1970), Moskowitz (1971), Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), Spada and Fröhlich (1995), and Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) were also consulted, as was work by Hardman and Leat (1998), Hardman and Williamson (1998), Hardman and Mroz (1999), Mendoza Lopez (2005), and Smith, Hardman and Higgins (2006). Event frequencies were subsequently calculated in terms of percentages of the total lesson time. As suggested by Dörnyei (2007, p. 180), the total tally marks for each event were added up and percentages acquired by dividing the sum by the total lesson time (60 minutes) and multiplying it by 100.

The observation scheme used in this study also contained a rating scale that I completed at the end of each observed lesson in order to help me determine the presence or absence of certain general events and behaviours. In fact, its purpose is 'for the researcher to make some overall judgements about some aspects of the class observed' (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 180). The rating scale's design was based on a set of observation guidelines developed by Gosling (2006), on a classroom observation scheme that features in a study by Hardman (2008), and on some of Ofsted's (2010) generic grade descriptors for English. Rating scales are part of a structured approach to classroom observation and 'The main criticism of the use of rating scales is that they…depend to a considerable extent on the judgement of the individual observer' (Simpson & Tuson, 2003, p. 44). However, I sought to validate this instrument's results by discussing the completed rating scale with the observed teachers and in this manner tackling any possible bias on my part.

The main disadvantage associated with structured observation is that since checklists 'systematically reduce the raw data, interesting events in that data that are not included on the checklist will not be noted' (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 106). However, I partly addressed this problem by complementing the checklist with observation notes. While not commensurate to the rich description associated with an analytical observation approach, these notes allowed me to record any thoughts and questions evoked by what I was observing. Moreover, the act of integrating classroom observation with semi-structured interviews allowed me 'to fill out an interpretation of what was happening in the classroom that would not have been apparent from event counting alone' (Wragg, 1999, p. 11). According to Wragg

(1999), 'Observations and interviews allow the taken-for-granted to be explored in greater detail' (p. 55). For this reason each one of the observed teachers was interviewed soon after the session, as were a selection of their students.

3.6.4 Piloting the Observation Scheme

By piloting the instrument before using it in the main study I made sure that the checklist categories were as precise a description of the lesson events that I wanted to investigate. Piloting is considered necessary because researchers need to sharpen their focus (Wragg, 1999, p. 26) and 'judge the frequency of events and the level of demand of the decision taking' (Simpson & Tuson, 2003, p. 32). The observation scheme was piloted in a poetry lesson delivered by a teacher working at a post-secondary institution of comparable size to Junior College.

The lesson was delivered by a teacher with 12 years' teaching experience, who despite having a Master's degree in English Literature did not have a formal teaching qualification. This made her typical of the kind of untrained literature teachers described by Showalter (2003, p. 4) and thus of the majority of teachers who formed part of the main study. The most frequent event during this particular lesson was that of the teacher explaining something in relation to poetry. The teacher's explanations slackened in frequency only when the students were working in small groups but otherwise they were present throughout most of the lesson. Group work was present for almost one third of the lesson. However, Harkin, Turner and Dawn (2001) warn that 'Supposedly student-centred approaches, for example using group work, can in fact be highly teacher-centred and didactic' (p. 75). In fact, during a subsequent interview (Appendix 52) the teacher actually admitted that the group work activities I had observed during the session were purposefully devised for my visit, this being a clear example of the Hawthorne effect: 'I said let me do them because I want to be a little interactive and I want to give them an opportunity to speak on their own' (TBB). This made me aware of the need to address such an effect in the main study by questioning each observed teacher about the reasons for certain teaching decisions, in order to ascertain whether these are typical of their style of teaching or motivated by my presence.

Certain categories in the events checklist did not register any frequency and upon further consideration I decided that these should best be omitted so as to facilitate the inclusion of events that despite occurring quite often during the

observed lesson were not present in the checklist, namely: 'Writes notes on the board', 'Encourages use of worksheet', and 'Refers to exam'. The descriptor for the category entitled 'Diagnostic follow-up' was amended to reflect the fact that the teacher not only provided such follow-up to a student's question but even to a suggestion or comment about poetry. The findings yielded by the rating scale I completed at the end of the lesson served as an indication that in the main study it would allow me to get a more holistic understanding of the observed teachers' methodology. However, due to the difficulty of actually judging some of the categories I decided to either omit these or rephrase them. For example, 'pace' and 'content level' were omitted because it proved highly difficult to observe tangible manifestations of these categories. Lastly, the observation notes proved to be important because they allowed me to jot down questions I had about certain aspects of the lesson. I then followed these up in the interview. The piloting of the observation scheme confirmed that when used in the main study the instrument would be able to provide me with a clear picture of how poetry is approached in class.

3.7 Semi-structured Interviews

In order to throw further light on the way teachers and students approach poetry, the classroom observation sessions discussed above were complemented by a series of semi-structured interviews conducted in a one-to-one manner (Appendices 18-25, 27-41). This conforms with Drever's (2003) recommendation to combine classroom observation with interviews in order to gather 'rich information about how teachers think as well as what they do' (p. 8). The purpose of these interviews was also that of highlighting teachers' and students' attitudes and beliefs in relation to poetry and the study of poetry. In this respect my choice of questions was guided by the insights developed in the course of reviewing the literature on poetry education and by consulting the instruments used by other researchers (e.g. O'Neill, 2008; Wilson, 2010). Moreover, by means of these interviews I sought to achieve a better understanding of the relationship between the interviewees' attitudes and beliefs, and their approach to poetry. For the purpose of data triangulation I also interviewed an influential MC English examiner and syllabus developer (Appendix 26). His views on teachers' and students' attitudes, beliefs and practices were meant to allow me to draw a more holistic picture.

I chose to use the semi-structured interview format because this 'allows for richer interactions and more personalised responses than the quasi-automaton interviewer armed with entirely pre-coded questions' (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 184). Semi-structured interviews are suitable for case study research because 'The researcher can adapt the main questions to suit people's complementary roles, and can explore their different perspectives in depth' (Drever, 2003, p. 7). Such interviews also allow the researcher to 'elicit additional data if initial answers are vague, incomplete, off-topic, or not specific enough' (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 173). The main advantage of using an interview for research purposes is that 'it allows for greater depth than is the case with other methods of data collection' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 352). According to Burns (2010), 'The aim of a semi-structured interview is to enable you to make some kind of comparison across your participants' responses, but also to allow for individual diversity and flexibility' (p. 75). Moreover, semi-structured interviews perfectly complement the use of classroom observation because 'the tools that aim to reveal what lies below the surface of classroom actions are often combined with observation methods to give a more rounded picture of what you are investigating' (Burns, 2010, p. 74). Combining classroom observation with semi-structured interviews proved to be an effective means of data crosschecking and method triangulation.

One of the disadvantages associated with semi-structured interviews is that the direct interaction involved entails a level of 'subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 352). When drafting the interview guides but also when conducting the interviews, I sought to avoid being judgemental and to refrain from communicating personal biases and values. I kept in mind the advice that 'some delicate balancing act is needed here between non-judgemental neutrality and empathetic understanding and approval' (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 141). The piloting of the interview guides (see 3.7.2) was crucial in helping me to achieve such a balance.

With the exception of one teacher who refused to participate in this study, all the other teachers of poetry at Junior College were interviewed after being observed teaching. The students asked to act as interviewees were chosen at random but in a systematic fashion. In line with Kvale's (2007) suggestion that 'In common interview studies, the amount of interviews tends to be around 15 ± 10' (p. 44), a total of 15 second-year students were interviewed. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and was conducted in one-to-one manner.

Each interview was transcribed by means of a standardised transcription code (Appendix 17). Keeping in mind that data analysis is 'almost inevitably interpretative' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 368), I used a coding frame to categorise the interviewees' responses. While most of the codes and themes were determined by the questions in the interview guides, thus allowing me to employ deductive coding, a number of others emerged from multiple rounds of reading and analysis of the transcripts, hence facilitating the kind of inductive coding used by some other poetry education researchers (see 3.1). The main emphasis of my analysis was on content and besides being interested in quantifying the frequency of certain codes I was also keen on establishing the relationship between different codes (Kvale, 2007, p. 105). This form of data analysis allowed me to gauge how many interviewees engaged in specific practices and held certain attitudes and beliefs. It also enabled me to shed light on the motives for such attitudes, beliefs and practices and to determine how these were connected to other beliefs and practices, and to the context.

3.7.1 Interview Guides

One of the reasons for which I opted for semi-structured interviews is that I wanted the interview guides to provide me with a sense of control of direction as well as an opportunity for some leeway. Semi-structured interviews 'have a structured overall framework but allow for greater flexibility within that, for example in changing the order of questions and for more extensive follow-up responses' (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 183). In such interviews 'the researcher uses a written list of questions as a guide, while still having the freedom to digress and probe for more information' (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 173). This combination of control and freedom allowed me to form a rich evaluation of each interviewee's attitudes, beliefs and practices while remaining consistent with the tenor of the other interviews.

The interview guides (Appendices 12-14) devised for this study reflect the different roles and responsibilities of the different interviewees but they still share many common questions to ensure a high level of consistency in the gathered data. The advantage of an interview guide is that 'it guarantees consistency of treatment across a set of interviews, which allows you to compare people's answers to questions which you have posed in the same way to everyone' (Drever, 2003, p. 18). The interview guides used in this study employ open-ended questions because 'they allow the interviewer to probe so that she may go into more depth if she

chooses…and they allow the interviewer to make a truer assessment of what the respondent really believes' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 357). These characteristics were very important for my study as I used the interviews as a means of plumbing teachers' and students' attitudes, beliefs and practices.

The teachers and students were not shown the interview guide beforehand because I wanted 'the interview to unfold naturally' (Drever, 2003, p. 41). However, in the case of the chief examiner a copy of the interview guide was made available well in advance of the interview. Drever (2003) believes it is appropriate to make such an 'exception…if you are interviewing someone in a policy-making position and you want them to give you a considered "official" view' (p. 41). Despite the fact that before commencing the interview the examiner provided me with written responses to all of the questions, I still chose to probe deeper and clarify some of his answers.

3.7.2 Piloting the Interview Guides

The pilot study allowed me to refine the interview guides as data gathering tools and improve their efficacy for the purposes of data analysis. Prior to the piloting phase, I asked a number of colleagues and mentors for feedback on the interview guides. Drever (2003) advises researchers to ask a number of 'people who are likely to be sympathetic to your work but willing to give forthright comments and precise criticism' to 'shred' (p. 31) the interview guide. By means of such feedback I was able to address such faults as inappropriate or unclear wording, and leading questions.

The shredding process was particularly important with regards to the chief examiner's interview guide. Given the near singularity of the roles of MC English examiner and syllabus developer in Malta, the only way in which this interview guide (Appendix 13) could be piloted was by submitting it to the scrutiny of an equally experienced examiner and syllabus developer, the head of the department (henceforth HOD) of English at Junior College. In a way the HOD acted as a debriefer throughout the entire duration of this study and his constructive criticism was considered necessary, especially given the fact that the technique of peer debriefing is 'useful in establishing credibility' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308).

The chief examiner's interview guide was redrafted once it was discussed with the HOD. The first suggestion he made was that of grouping questions

according to their topic and thus it was decided to revise the order of the questions and signpost each section of the interview guide so as to enable the interviewee to understand exactly what he is being asked to talk about. Moreover, the wording of certain questions was rephrased following the HOD's recommendations. For example, he suggested that some words in certain questions (e.g. 'impinge') might have negative connotations and hence might influence the examiner's responses. He also pinpointed phrases which might somewhat restrict the kind of response provided by the interviewee. Even though I decided to make the necessary changes, I kept in mind the need to ensure comparability with the other interview guides being used in the study.

In certain cases I failed to agree with the HOD's recommendations and opted not to make the suggested changes. For example, he advised me to omit questions on teaching methodology since this does not fall within the examiner's remit. Even though it is easy to understand the reasoning behind this suggestion, my intention was to explore what the examiner thinks about the process leading to the examination. Being in a position in which on a yearly basis he has direct access to hundreds of scripts and the feedback provided by a pool of markers, the examiner must surely have views about how and why we teach poetry and must therefore have an idea about what might be considered effective or not. Hence it was decided to retain the questions on teaching methodology. The HOD also pointed out that the examiner might find it hard to answer a question on whether MC English students enjoy poetry due to his distance from the classroom and thus his inability to gauge what happens during a poetry lesson. However, I felt that I had to disagree with the HOD because from the candidates' written responses the examiner must surely get a sense of whether they enjoy poetry. My decision to disagree with some of the HOD's suggestions was rewarded by means of richer data in the actual interview.

The interview guides used with the teachers and students (Appendices 12, 14) were piloted with interviewees at a post-secondary college that is very similar to Junior College. According to Burns (2010), piloting the interview guides is 'one way of increasing the validity of your findings' (p. 78). In the pilot study I interviewed one student and two poetry teachers, one of whom was Teacher BB whose lesson I had observed when piloting the observation scheme. As mentioned above, this particular interview served as a means of highlighting the possibility of reactivity during classroom observation. I realised that in future interviews I had to address this

issue by questioning each observed teacher about the reasons for certain teaching decisions. This would enable me to ascertain whether these decisions were typical of their style of teaching or a result of reactivity.

One of the main lessons I learnt by means of the pilot interviews was about the need to revise the order of the questions forming part of the interview guides in such a way that the different groupings better reflect the main thematic strands of the reviewed literature, the latter having played a fundamental role in the process of formulating the interview questions. I considered this change to be important given that 'the interview protocol helps guide the collection of data in a systematic and focused manner' (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010, p. 124). It also facilitated the process of coding and analysing the data.

After carefully analysing the transcripts of the three interviews (Appendices 51-52, 56) and identifying the patterns that emerged by means of the questions posed to the interviewees, it became clear that a number of modifications needed to be made to the two interview guides. This was necessary because the process of determining common patterns amongst the three transcripts was somewhat taxing due to the lack of a clear organisational structure. Kvale (2007) points out that a semi-structured interview should contain 'a sequence of themes to be covered' (p. 65) and that 'The method of analysis should…be built into the interview situation itself' (p. 102). Moreover, one of the 'Weaknesses' of the interview guide approach is the fact that 'Interviewer flexibility in sequencing and wording questions' can contribute to 'reducing the comparability of responses' (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 200). Hence the wording of a number of questions was changed so that the two interview guides reflected each other as far as possible; the order of the questions was also revised for the same purpose. Some questions were omitted because the answers provided by the interviewees overlapped substantially with those of other questions, and a number of new questions were included to tap a few lacunae in the interview guides. As far as possible the two interview guides were adjusted to mirror each other in terms of content and sequence so as to facilitate the process of ascribing category labels to the data while conducting analysis. This was partly done by signposting each group of questions by means of titles that are to a large extent shared by the two interview guides, thus creating highly similar strings of questions. These adjustments were also made for the sake of ensuring consistency across interviews (Carden, 2009, p. 340; Persaud, 2010, p. 634). By means of the changes made to the interview guides

I felt confident that these instruments would enable me to highlight interviewees' attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry and the study of poetry much more effectively than in the pilot study. This was also the case with the topic guide used in the focus group interviews, which are discussed next.

3.8 Focus Group Interviews

Two focus groups with students of poetry were conducted as part of this study. A focus group is used when the researcher is trying 'to uncover factors that influence opinions, behaviour, or motivation' (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 24). This made such an instrument ideal for this study given my efforts to understand students' attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry. By using focus groups I was aiming 'to promote self-disclosure among participants' (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 7). Focus groups can 'provide access to participants' meanings and conceptualizations as they interrogate and debate the issues raised' (Barbour, 2007, p. 111). They are based on 'the notion that apparently illogical beliefs and practices, once viewed from the perspectives of the people involved, are likely to display a coherent and possibly highly sophisticated logic' (Barbour, 2007, p. 24). This, however, entails creating an atmosphere in which the participants can trust the moderator not to judge their views. Achieving this was one of the main challenges I faced given the fact that the student participants needed to keep in mind that besides being a teacher at their school I was also acting as a researcher. I thus had to reassure the participants that whilst conducting the focus group I was wearing the researcher's hat and was in no way interested in judging their opinions about poetry, their lessons and my colleagues. Guaranteeing absolute confidentiality proved most helpful in this regard.

The use of focus groups in this study fulfilled the purpose of data and method triangulation. This instrument was incorporated into the research design due to the fact that it 'facilitates interpretation of quantitative results and adds depth to the responses obtained in the more structured survey' (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007, p. 41). Moreover, by means of focus groups a researcher can 'encourage participation of individuals who may otherwise be reluctant to talk about their experiences' (Barbour, 2007, pp. 18-19). Focus groups have an edge over semi-structured interviews in 'taking the individual spotlight off one speaker, who may get nervous or anxious about being interviewed, and allowing ideas and thoughts to be triggered by what others in the group say' (Burns, 2010, p. 77). By using focus

groups in conjunction with other instruments I sought to reinforce the data gathering process and facilitate data crosschecking.

Each focus group consisted of four students who were all in the same year group but who were not necessarily taught by the same poetry teacher. Sampling was conducted on the basis of the idea that 'Participants are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus group' (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 4). Whilst having 'homogeneity', the focus group also possesses 'sufficient variation among participants to allow for contrasting opinions' (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 71). Barbour (2007) explains that 'the purpose of qualitative sampling is to reflect that diversity within the group or population under study rather than aspiring to recruit a representative sample' (p. 58). Given that 'the dynamics of the focus group works better with homogenous samples' (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 144), this was the purposeful sampling strategy used in this study.

The number of students per focus group was based on the need to ensure that they felt comfortable enough to participate as well as on an awareness of the challenges involved in recruiting and hosting bigger groups (Krueger & Casey, 2000, pp. 73-74). Their number was restricted to four due to the problems posed by managing a larger group and transcribing so many different voices (Langdridge & Hagger-Johnson, 2009, p. 74). With regards to the number of focus groups to hold, Barbour (2007) explains that 'holding two focus groups with groups with similar characteristics may place the researcher on firmer ground in relation to making claims about the patterning of the data' (p. 59). In this study theoretical saturation was reached after the second focus group. Each focus group lasted around 30 minutes.

A semi-structured topic guide (Appendix 15) was used in the focus groups 'to illuminate the insider's or "emic" perspective' (Barbour, 2007, p. 33). It consists of twelve open-ended questions, this being slightly above Dörnyei's (2007) recommended limit (p. 145). This is important because 'the strength of the focus group is that the structure should not be limiting. Discussion should flow to allow issues and perspectives to emerge and to be discussed' (Newby, 2014, p. 366). At the same time, however, I wanted to secure a fair amount of consistency in terms of the questions asked as I aimed 'to compare and contrast responses across groups' (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 66). I thus needed to ensure that as far as possible the discussion remained focused on the topic.

In line with the literature's recommendations (Krueger & Casey, 2000), the focus group interviews were audio recorded and transcribed; notes were also kept. Permission to use video recording was not granted but I did not consider this to be a major setback given the fact that video recording has the 'potential to increase participants' discomfort or self-consciousness' (Barbour, 2007, p. 76). The notes were used to record my observations about group dynamics and any important considerations regarding the focus group discussion.

The same transcription code used for the semi-structured interviews was used when transcribing the focus group interviews. A coding frame was devised to categorise the participants' responses and while the topic guide served as 'a starting point', I followed Barbour's (2007) advice not to 'rely overly on this to generate all your themes or coding categories' (p. 117). This is important as 'the coding frame should be flexible enough to incorporate themes introduced by focus group participants as well' (Barbour, 2007, p. 117). As in the case of the semi-structured interviews, when analysing the focus group data I sought to both quantify the frequency of certain attitudes, beliefs and practices as well as establish relationships between different kinds of attitudes, beliefs and practices. I sought to identify both inter- and intra-group differences and to engage in 'the systematic application of constant comparison' (Barbour, 2007, p. 131). This helped me produce a truly analytical account rather than a merely descriptive one.

3.8.1 Piloting the Topic Guide

The piloting of the topic guide took place with a group of four second-year students attending Junior College in the year before the main data gathering exercise. Just as in the latter, the pilot participants formed a largely homogenous group (Litosseliti, 2003, p. 4). The focus group enabled them to expound on their views in relation to poetry and the study of poetry. After analysing the data I concluded that with a number of adjustments the topic guide would serve the purpose of throwing light on students' attitudes, beliefs and practices, especially if fashioned in parallel to the other data gathering instruments.

The piloting served as a means of checking the quality of the questions in terms of their clarity and their potential to elicit adequate responses. Just as for the interview guides, the main change that needed to be made to the topic guide was in terms of the ordering of the questions. When analysing the transcript it became

apparent that it would be easier to sift through the data if the questions could be grouped into distinct topics. For example, one particular question was moved from an isolated position to the group of questions dealing with poetry lessons. These groups were also signposted to facilitate the process of analysis even further and to allow this particular tool to share the consistency of the other instruments used in this study. A few questions were also overhauled to keep them in line with changes made in the interview guides and this was necessary because 'If you want to make comparisons across people or groups of people, then you really need to get at least similar information from all of them' (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p. 29). Eventually, this facilitated the process of data crosschecking in the main study.

3.9 Interview Stimulus Material

Towards the end of each semi-structured and focus group interview, I used stimulus material to allow the interviewees to elaborate further on their experiences of a poetry lesson. Stimulus material is defined by the Association for Qualitative Research (AQR, 2013) as 'Material of a visual, verbal and/or auditory nature used to communicate certain ideas to enable them to be researched, or to stimulate discussion of relevant topics.' Newby (2014) points out that while 'It is not difficult to get people to give opinions, it *is* difficult to help them articulate why they hold those opinions'; hence, 'it is important to move beyond statements into explanations and justifications' (p. 368). This can be achieved by combining questions with stimulus material, which stimulates discussion and facilitates comparisons across different interviews (Barbour, 2007, p. 85). According to Callingham (2004), 'Stimulus material is something that is given to respondents for them to see, handle, feel, touch, consume, examine and experience, and is a way of getting them into a more concrete frame of mind' (p. 129). Stimulus material in some studies acts as 'an adjunct to help the respondent conceptualise something' (Callingham, 2004, p. 129). In fact, interviewers are advised to use stimulus material 'so that the discussion can relate to something concrete, rather than launch straight into abstract ideas' (Denscombe, 2010, p. 185). Stimulus material has the potential to enhance an interview because of a number of benefits, including respondent involvement, richness of data, colour and nuance in the findings, and means of working with abstract concepts (Chrzanowska, 2002, p. 136). When 'stimulus material is brought into the research with the specific objective of *enabling respondents to say more about the subject*' it 'triggers cues and

associations, giving a richer response than unprompted questions' (Chrzanowska, 2002, p. 122). This is particularly true in the case of interviews with young people, where the use of stimulus material 'helps to make words and concepts concrete to them, and to keep them involved' (Chrzanowska, 2002, p. 122). Stimulus material can enrich interview data by facilitating the process of verbalising thoughts, feelings, values and beliefs.

Despite its benefits, the use of stimulus material as part of an interview poses a number of challenges, most of which have to do with selection and use. For this reason careful attention must be paid to how the stimulus material is chosen and incorporated in an interview. Callingham (2004) posits that 'stimulus material provides an area where many things can go wrong, and its inclusion in the actual design helps to concentrate the mind and reduce the likelihood of this happening' (p. 130). The literature on educational assessment also indicates some guidelines that may be adopted by the interviewer. Gareis and Grant (2008), for example, maintain that in using stimulus material one must be cautious that 'The stimulus material should not explicitly provide the correct answer. Instead, stimulus material should require students to *interpret* the information or data presented' (p. 122). For this reason, some of the characteristics of good stimulus material include:

> It is substantive and worth examining closely.
> It is likely to be of interest to the target audience.
> It is optimally challenging, not too hard or too easy.
> It offers opportunity for searching questions.
> It is self-contained. (Anderson & Morgan, 2008, p. 31)

The choice of stimulus material will most usually be made because of its potential to lead to a specific set of insights into the interviewees' values and beliefs. However, in order to ensure validity it is important that stimulus material be 'content analyzed beforehand. This enables a distinction between the "objective" facts of the situation and the interviewees' subjective definitions of the situation with a view to comparing them' (Flick, 2009, p. 150). Morrison and Ross (2014) affirm that 'Underlying the particular focus and concomitant selection of stimulus materials is the researcher's emphasis on addressing different types of validity concerns' (p. 36). Small-scale studies in qualitative research will most usually opt for materials that make high internal validity possible. The selection and use of stimulus material need to be

conducted carefully if the benefits associated with this instrument are to yield the desired results.

The stimulus material used in this study consisted of the poem 'Introduction to Poetry' by Billy Collins (1988) (Appendix 16). When poetry is used in qualitative research it has the potential 'to communicate findings in multidimensional, penetrating, and more accessible ways' (Cahnmann, 2003, p. 35). I realised that by incorporating a question on a poem in the interview guide I could better understand 'the richness and complexity of the observed world' (Cahnmann, 2003, p. 34). Collins's poem was used in order 'to generate less analytical and more imaginative responses' (Morgan, Fellows, & Guevara, 2008, p. 198). I chose this poem partly because of what Collins (2003) says about poetry and school: 'all too often it is the place where poetry goes to die' (p. xvii). For Cahnmann (2003), this poem is about how 'In essence, critical analysis of poetry has taken away from what might otherwise be a pleasurable experience, an unlabelled appreciation of the language, image, and music in verse' (p. 29). The other reason for which I opted for this poem is that I had already used it during a number of literary criticism seminars and teacher training workshops and thus knew what potential it had for sparking the kind of thoughts I was interested in exploring. When selecting a poem as stimulus material it is important that it leads to interest and engagement by having a theme that is likely to evoke a personal response (Evans, Midgley, Rigby, Warham, & Woolnough, 2009, 55). As stimulus material, Collins's (1988) poem had all the necessary qualities for it to be effective (Barbour, 2007, p. 84). By means of it I wanted the interviewees to provide me with more than their reading of the poem; I was mostly interested in what they thought it said about their experiences of poetry lessons (Xerri, in press-c). The act of discussing a poem that focused on poetry education would serve as a springboard for a reflection on their own approach to poetry in class. In the process, the poem would also help foreground their attitudes and beliefs about poetry and the study of poetry.

The examiner and the teachers were presented with a printed copy of the poem while the students were first presented with a printed copy and then shown a one-minute film adaptation (CD Appendix 58) of it. The potential of video clips as a means of eliciting an even richer response from research participants (Chelliah & de Reuse, 2011; Essex, 2006) led me to incorporate the video rendition of Collins's poem as part of the stimulus material. The use of visuals as a means of eliciting rich

interview data is documented widely. In her study, Folkestad (2000) found that photographs 'provided more of a concrete base for our conversations than mere verbally formulated questions would do' (p. 18). This was also the case with Harper (2002), who claims that 'photo elicitation mines deeper shafts into a different part of human consciousness than do words-alone interviews' (pp. 22-23). Similarly, Richard and Lahman (2015) indicate that photo-elicitation interviewing is a means 'to gain access to participant beliefs and values, and to highlight participant voices through their choices of words and visuals' (p. 4). The use of visuals as stimulus material is particularly useful when interviewing young adults given that they 'have been brought up in a visually dominant world and have learnt to extract information from pictures through parallel processing rather better than through the serial processing of words' (Chrzanowska, 2002, p. 122). Moreover, since video poetry is considered an effective means of encouraging students to enjoy the reading and discussion of poetry (Templer, 2009), I reasoned that the students participating in the study would be more forthright in their response to the stimulus material. The video poem I used in my study was produced as part of the City Voices, City Visions project (University of Buffalo Graduate School of Education, 2009) and according to Miller (2010) it 'demonstrates how the process of designing sound, image, movement, and dramatic reading both requires and creates a deep understanding of the print text' (p. 20). This video was chosen out of a number of others because its interpretation is not too culturally specific in its choice of images and the latter are relatively neutral by not explicitly imposing a specific interpretation of the poem. Nonetheless, I was aware that the very fact I chose this specific poem reflected my own perception of what was possibly taking place in poetry lessons. Hence, by means of my questions about the text I made sure to use it as a stimulus for discussion of the participants' attitudes, beliefs and practices rather than a means for them to unquestionably identify themselves with the situation presented in the poem (Xerri, in press-c). This was significant as otherwise the use of stimulus material would be counterproductive.

3.9.1 Piloting the Stimulus Material

To determine the stimulus material's suitability for the purposes of this study it was included in all the semi-structured and focus group interviews forming part of the pilot study. The two teachers who helped pilot the stimulus material claimed that

Collins's poem did to some extent describe their experiences during poetry lessons. They indicated that students seemed to be dependent on the teacher's explanation because of the impending examination. This view was echoed in the pilot interview with one of their students, who suggested that studying poetry was somewhat frustrating because of its difficulty. The students who took part in the pilot focus group proposed very similar ideas to the aforementioned ones, pointing out that their approach to poetry was influenced by examination pressure and by the notion that poetry was difficult to understand. Nonetheless, by analysing the transcripts I realised that in future interviews I would need to ask many other probing questions in order to plumb interviewees' views about why they identify with or dissociate themselves from the situation described in the poem. This would enable me to use the instrument more effectively and thus develop an understanding of teachers' and students' attitudes and beliefs and how these influence their practices. Using stimulus material as part of the interviews confirmed that the instrument would allow me to answer my research questions. However, in the process I was also able to reflect on my own shortcomings as an interviewer, especially in light of the fact that a lack of experience may lead one not to ask probing questions (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 394).

Besides forming part of the actual pilot interviews, the stimulus material was also piloted with a class of nine students who were just about to finish their two-year course and who could thus provide me with a written response to the poem that took into consideration their experience of poetry lessons while at Junior College. Like Hanratty (2011) I chose to combine students' verbal and written responses to the poem, thus gaining the reassurance that it would serve its research function. The students' anonymous responses (CD Appendix 59 Responses A-I) confirmed that Collins's poem was suitable for the purposes of this study because it led students to discuss their experiences while studying poetry. The statements showed that the students were aware of what they liked and disliked in terms of teaching methodology. Most of the students indicated that they appreciated a teacher who gave them an opportunity to engage with poetry by discussing a poem amongst themselves rather than merely expecting them to listen to his or her explanation. The idea that examination pressure could be one of the reasons for the latter approach was also mentioned. The issues raised while piloting the stimulus material with teachers and students suggested that it fulfilled the purpose of aiding the interviewees to 'be

creative and explore their own thoughts more deeply' (Adams & Brace, 2006, p. 86) in relation to this study's research questions.

When the HOD was asked for feedback about the examiner's interview guide he took issue with the idea of asking the examiner about Collins's poem. He remarked that in the context of such an interview this question might be considered 'somewhat childish.' This was due to the possibility that it might be awkward for the examiner to feel he needed to come up with an interpretation. However, as noted above, the use of poetry within a qualitative study has the ability to yield rich data (Cahnmann, 2003; Hanauer, 2010). Collins's poem, in particular, tackles the issues of poetry teaching, assessment, and student engagement head-on. Thus I wanted the examiner to state his views in relation to these issues by means of appropriate stimulus material that contained all the necessary qualities for it to be effective (Barbour, 2007, p. 85). Moreover, due to the need to ensure a level of consistency and a 'Uniformity of stimulus presented to informant/respondent' (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 121) across all the interviews conducted as part of this study, I could not omit this question from this particular interview guide.

With regards to the film adaptation of Collins's poem, the focus group students affirmed that watching the video 'definitely helps' because 'it makes the poem come alive.' The video 'gives you a very clear picture of what the poet is saying.' This seemed to confirm the idea that the video would allow students to engage in an even richer discussion of their experience of poetry lessons. Moreover, the very fact that the video was an interpretation of the printed poem would enable them to reflect on their own reading of the poem and identify any parallels or discrepancies and relate these to their own classroom experience. Besides forming part of the pilot interviews, the video was also shown to another five students and their views were recorded in note form. They claimed that the video described their experiences of poetry lessons and helped them understand the poem better. They felt that it is 'very clear in its ideas' and 'makes it easy to know what he's saying.' They remarked that 'it's very simple' but 'gets the poem's message across.'

In his role as a debriefer, the HOD was also asked for feedback about this video poem, as were two senior colleagues (Appendices 53-55). All three teachers suggested that the video is a 'simple interpretation and it manages to capture the gist of the poem very well' (TEE). They maintained that 'rather than constraining…it would assist' (TDD) the reading of the poem. They agreed with the idea of showing

students the video since they were 'primarily visual individuals' (TEE), this being in line with Kress's (2003) suggestion that 'this generation…is best addressed through image' (p. 56). This was also the reason for which they proposed that I should show students the video before giving them a copy of the poem. However, for the sake of consistency across all the different kinds of interviews I opted to provide interviewees with the printed poem first. Moreover, students in class typically come in contact with poetry through print. The HOD emphasised the idea that A-level students do not 'need the video or the film to understand the poem or…need the written poem to understand what the video is trying to suggest', however, he still considered showing the video to students to be a good idea because 'it picks on the right points of the poem' (TCC). By piloting the video poem I realised that while it would be appropriate to show the video to students because the visual mode may act as a springboard for their understanding of the written poem (Albers, 2006, p. 87), using this particular extension of the stimulus material with teachers would merely lead to a substantial amount of redundancy.

The choice of stimulus material was based on my own judgement as to which text out of all those explicitly dealing with poetry pedagogy was most likely to encourage participants in a discussion of their attitudes, beliefs and practices. Nonetheless, the piloting of both the printed poem and video consolidated the notion that the stimulus material would enable me to arrive at a better understanding of the interviewees' attitudes, beliefs and practices in the main study.

3.10 Research Ethics

This study was conducted in accordance with the research ethics guidelines set by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011), the code of ethics established by the American Educational Research Association (AERA, 2011), and the research ethics framework developed by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC, 2015). Moreover, the study followed the ethical guidelines and procedures established by the University of York's Department of Education (2015).

Despite the fact that I did not research my own practice, my study posed a number of ethical challenges typical of practitioner research given that I conducted case study research at the school where I taught. Hence, the research participants consisted for the most part of my colleagues and students. Gorman (2007) highlights some of the difficulties such research entails:

In educational research, the 'research practitioner' will have varying relationships and corresponding responsibilities that can be difficult to reconcile… In all practice-based research complications can arise if there are conflicts between one's roles and responsibilities. When anyone is engaged in researching their own practice or institution, further difficulties can arise when it comes to determining whose interests he or she is primarily responsible for. (p. 15)

In my research I dealt with these challenges by engaging in reflexivity (see 3.4.1), ensuring that my study possessed validity (see 3.4.2) and trustworthiness (see 3.4.3), as well as addressing the issue of observer's bias (see 3.6.2). Moreover, I embraced the belief that 'ethical principles do not necessarily constrain or weaken the design and results of research. Sometimes ethics contributes to strengthening the quality of research, and vice versa' (Tangen, 2014, p. 678). To this extent I sought to achieve an ethics of care (Costley & Gibbs, 2006). Coy (2006) affirms that 'Clarity over the practitioner role is the key, and this should be based on a primary responsibility of the duty of care as a practitioner to all participants' (p. 429). Costley and Gibbs (2006) argue that 'researchers undertaking research within their own organization…are insiders who have insider knowledge not only of systems but also of the individuals they designate, for the purpose of the research, as subjects' (p. 90). In this kind of research 'an "ethics of care" ought to prevail' (Costley & Gibbs, 2006, p. 90). This is significant because 'To strip our researching of care is to strip our researched of their humanity and our findings of authenticity' (Gibbs & Costley, 2006, p. 243). This entails the moral obligation on the part of researchers not to exploit the trust that colleagues and students acting as research participants place in them (Gibbs & Costley, 2006). It also entails engaging in research that is '*transparent in its processes*' and in which the researcher is 'accountable to their community for the processes and products of their research' (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2007, p. 205). One of the reasons why I included all the documentation that formed part of this study in the appendices was due to the need to ensure transparency, which also serves to establish the trustworthiness of my research.

Those who are interested in researching their own institution in an ethical fashion are advised to strike a balance between risk, benefit and consent (Gorman, 2007). Fraser (1997) explains that such researchers need to consider 'all the potential consequences for individuals likely to be affected by the study, as well as the

organisation' (p. 169). The main element of risk posed by my research lied perhaps in the fact that despite ensuring the anonymity of my participants I did not wish to and could not realistically anonymise the name of the school where I conducted the study. This was because the unique identity of Junior College as an institution was crucial to my understanding of attitudes, beliefs and practices in poetry education at the only post-secondary school affiliated to the University of Malta. Fraser (1997) affirms that 'Of more importance in any study, than assuring anonymity, is to be honest at the outset about the degree to which anonymity and confidentiality can be guaranteed' (p. 167). For this reason I discussed my study with the administrative body at Junior College and only commenced my research once the necessary authorisation had been issued. Moreover, the research participants were made aware that the name of the institution would not be anonymised.

With regards to the benefits for the participants and institution forming part of my study, I kept in mind that research conducted in one's own professional context '*should be transformative in its intent and action*' (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2007, p. 206). Such research would deserve to be called responsible and ethical if it 'operates in such a way as to create actionable, actioned outcomes' (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2007, p. 206). According to Munford, Sanders, Mirfin-Veitch and Conder (2008), 'research should be about discovering how to make a positive difference. Thinking about how research findings can be of use to participants and can influence practice is integral to the research process' (p. 64). This is significant given that

> Traditional academic research in education is conducted by outsiders who intervene in the instructional process to answer questions that may benefit themselves or the profession in general. While there is often a goal of improving teaching, rarely do the teachers or students under investigation benefit directly from the findings. (Zeni, 1998, pp. 12-13)

While my research has resulted in a set of recommendations (see 6.3) that are especially relevant to my colleagues and students due to the fact that they emerged from an investigation of poetry education at Junior College, achieving transformation is still bound to be challenging. Any attempts to instigate change will prove difficult unless teacher education and development is not harnessed to this effect.

Given the significance of the principle of informed consent (Groundwater-

Smith & Mockler, 2007), the chief examiner, teachers, and students who took part in my study were informed about its research purpose and asked to provide their consent to contribute to it (Appendices 3-9). In asking for their consent I sought to follow the principle of plain speaking, which is defined as 'the right of members of the research group and the wider interest community to be communicated with in language that maximises their understanding and is not characterised by unnecessary jargon' (Locke, Alcorn, & O'Neill, 2013, p. 113). Moreover, I followed the principle of communicative freedom, which states that 'Members of the research group have the right to withdraw or renegotiate the grounds for their participation at any time' (Locke, Alcorn, & O'Neill, 2013, p. 113). I made it very clear to everyone I invited to be involved in my study that they could refuse to take part or stop participating once the study was underway. In fact, one of the teachers I asked to interview and observe refused to participate in the study. Despite the fact that she was a published poet and hence valuable to my research, I refrained from putting any pressure on her.

3.11 Conclusion

The above sections provide an overview of the research instruments used in this study and how they led to an understanding of teachers' and students' attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry and the study of poetry. These sections also describe how I sought to overcome a number of challenges in the data gathering and analysis process, challenges that were partly addressed thanks to the pilot study (Appendix 44). By means of the pilot study it was possible not only to test and refine the different instruments and procedures to be used, but its insights also helped with the fine-tuning of the research questions (Mertens, 2010, p. 455) presented above.

From a careful analysis of the limited amount of data gathered in the pilot study it became clear that poetry was mainly perceived as an assessable component with practically no shelf life beyond the limited confines of the classroom and examination hall. For this reason, the most prevalent approach to poetry amongst teachers and students seemed aimed at bolstering the latter's ability to write about a poem in such a manner that they satisfied examination requirements. This ran contrary to the practice of enabling students to genuinely engage with poetry by cultivating an 'enhanced potential for epistemological and affective development within the classroom' (Hennessy, Hinchion, & Mannix McNamara, 2010, pp. 182-183). Despite its small-scale nature, the pilot testing proved vital in confirming that

the chosen design was sufficiently reliable and effective for the task of answering the main study's research questions.

The mixed methods design employed in this study truly 'offers a more powerful choice that lends itself to offering complete, useful, and balanced results' (Behar-Horenstein, 2010, p. 579). The consistency between the inferences made and the similar findings yielded by the study's different instruments indicates that it possesses 'interpretive consistency'; given the fact that these inferences are consistent with contemporary research then it is apparent that the study has 'theoretical consistency' too (Nastasi, Hitchcock, & Brown, 2010, p. 311; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, pp. 303-304). The synergy between the different instruments discussed above allowed me to explore more effectively the way poetry is approached in class and the attitudes and beliefs that influence such an approach.

This chapter's discussion of a number of methodological considerations aims to show how the decisions I took whilst conducting the study allowed me to answer my research questions about how the participants approach poetry in class, their attitudes and beliefs in relation to poetry and the study of poetry, and the relationship between these attitudes and beliefs and their practices in a poetry lesson. The findings presented in the next chapter are a product of decisions concerning my own positioning as a researcher, the instruments I used to collect and analyse the data, and the measures I took to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of my study.

Chapter 4 – Findings

This chapter reports the findings that emerged after an analysis of the data collected by means of the following research instruments:

- a survey completed by 376 students;
- classroom observation (using an events checklist, rating scale and notes) of eight poetry lessons delivered by eight teachers;
- semi-structured interviews with the eight observed teachers;
- semi-structured interviews with 15 students;
- a semi-structured interview with the chief examiner and syllabus developer for MC English;
- two focus group interviews consisting of four students each.

The data collected by means of these instruments sheds light on the participants' attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry and the study of poetry at Advanced level at Junior College. The findings yielded by each instrument are presented discretely (i.e. survey, classroom observation, and interviews) and further subdivided in terms of a number of broad categories reflecting the themes that emerged from data analysis. A full discussion of the patterns that cut across the different sets of findings is carried out in Chapter 5, which is also where links with the reviewed literature are made.

This chapter quotes substantially from the notes and transcripts completed as part of the study. Each teacher (T) and student (S) is identified by means of an alphabetical letter (e.g. TA, SA). In the case of the focus group interviews, students are identified by means of a number and a letter to indicate the focus group they formed part of (e.g. S1A).

4.1 Student Survey

As part of the study, I distributed a questionnaire amongst all the 376 students studying Advanced level English at Junior College. The main aim of the questionnaire was that of gauging the attitudes, beliefs and practices of the entire Advanced level English student population in relation to poetry and the study of poetry. The questionnaire was meant to provide me with a broad overview of students' relationship with poetry and its pedagogy. The questionnaire was completed by 96 male and 280 female students.
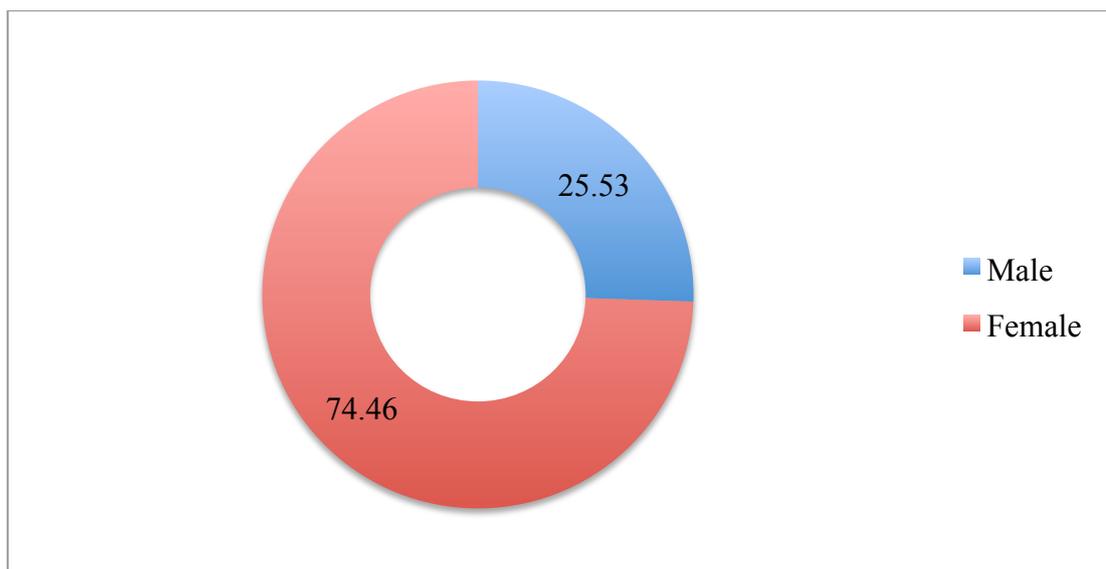
Figure 1 – Percentage of Male and Female Students

4.1.1 Defining, Ranking and Reading Poetry

In order to determine the kind of relationship that students have with poetry, the respondents were asked a number of questions about their poetry reading practices as well as their attitudes towards its enjoyment and difficulty as part of the syllabus but, first, the respondents were asked to provide a definition of poetry by completing the sentence 'Poetry is…'. More than three quarters of them defined poetry as a 'form of expression'. They seemed to consider poetry to be primarily 'the poet's way of expressing emotions and thoughts'. This expression could also be a means of 'evoking emotions in the reader'. While some respondents pointed out that 'readers are free to understand poetry in the way they feel is best', others claimed that the poet's expression is 'meaningless for most readers'.

More than half of respondents linked the idea of expression to 'a different and more creative way of writing', most probably when compared to the different kinds of essays they were typically accustomed to writing. In fact, the second most popular definition was that of seeing poetry as 'a form of art' or as one student put it, 'art in words'. According to one student, poetry was 'an art only few can see the beauty of and even fewer can write', perhaps suggesting that poetry is an elitist art form. This link between poetry and the poet led one student to define it as 'the poet's clothing. Without poetry, the poet is naked'. Some respondents indicated that poetry was 'a piece of writing with a hidden meaning' and a few of them declared that it was 'also

very hard to understand'. A minority of respondents defined poetry in terms of its use of rhythm, rhyme and figures of speech. According to one student, 'Words are chosen extremely carefully not only for meaning but because of sound as well'. Another student mentioned that poetry was 'something with a sense of musicality and structure'. A few respondents associated poetry with the subject they studied at school. In fact, one of them defined it as 'a means of analysing the text with the use of literary tools'.

By means of three separate questions, the respondents were asked to rank a number of elements, including poetry, in terms of different factors. The first question was made up of ten elements while the other two were made up of nine each. The ranking order for each element was computed by adding up the rankings assigned by females, males and all students. For the ranking question on popularity of reading materials, the total possible score for all respondents was 3700 (376x10), 2800 for females (280x10), and 960 for males (96x10). For the ranking questions on enjoyment and difficulty of syllabus components, the total possible score for all respondents was 3384 (376x9), 2520 for females (280x9), and 864 for males (96x9). The higher the score obtained by a particular element, the lower its ranking.

The respondents were first asked to rank the kind of materials they read in English. As shown by Table 1, the most popular reading materials are made up of digital texts while poetry placed in the penultimate position.

Table 1 – Ranking of Reading Materials Read Mostly in English			
	Females *N=280*	Males *N=96*	All students *N=376*	Overall Ranking
Social Networking Sites	588	208	796	1
Websites	742	288	1030	2
Magazines	896	400	1296	3
Novels	868	464	1332	4
Non-fiction books	1344	479	1823	5
Newspapers	1428	496	1924	6
Comics	1854	416	2270	7
Drama	1862	528	2390	8
Poetry	1960	624	2584	9
Other	2709	920	3629	10

The above results seem to be in line with international research showing that the reading of poetry amongst young people ranks very low (Clark & Douglas, 2011; Manuel & Brindley, 2012; Manuel & Robinson, 2002).

Table 2 shows that Wilfred Owen's poetry seems to be a component that the respondents enjoyed a lot. However, the same cannot be said for the literary criticism of poetry, which was ranked at the very bottom. Both male and female students seemed to consider it the least enjoyable component.

Table 2 – Ranking of Components in Terms of Enjoyment				
	Females *N=280*	Males *N=96*	All students *N=376*	Overall Ranking
Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*	448	368	816	1
Wilfred Owen's poetry	875	176	1051	2
Shakespeare's *Othello*	1022	320	1342	3
Comprehension and summary	1421	272	1693	4
Language essay	1267	464	1731	5
Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter*	1379	704	2083	6
Literary criticism: prose (unseen)	1778	624	2402	7
Linguistics	1897	592	2489	8
Literary criticism: poetry (unseen)	2093	800	2893	9

Table 3 shows that Owen's poetry ranked quite low in terms of difficulty. This is in stark contrast to the literary criticism of poetry; both male and female students deemed this as being the most difficult syllabus component.

Table 3 – Ranking of Components in Terms of Difficulty				
	Females N=280	Males N=96	All students N=376	Overall Ranking
Literary criticism: poetry (unseen)	707	176	883	1
Literary criticism: prose (unseen)	868	392	1260	2
Linguistics	1071	416	1487	3
Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter*	1274	456	1730	4
Shakespeare's *Othello*	1330	576	1906	5
Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*	1750	400	2150	6
Wilfred Owen's poetry	1701	648	2349	7
Language essay	1967	544	2511	8
Comprehension and summary	1995	712	2707	9

When the students were asked how often they read poetry for pleasure the majority of them indicated that they either never do so or else only on rare occasions. As shown by Figure 2, the total amount of students who chose these two options amounted to around 81%.
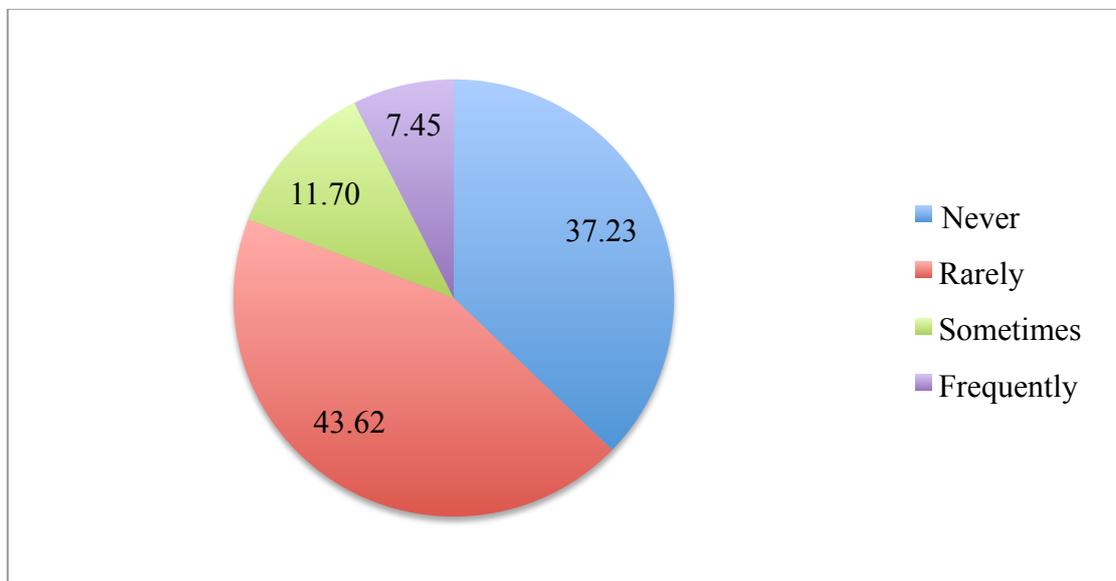
Figure 2 – Students' Reading of Poetry for Pleasure

4.1.2 Listening to Poetry

Around 95% of students had never attended an event at which they listened to a poet read his or her work in English. However, 67% of them said they would like the

Department of English at Junior College to organize poetry readings in the future. Most of these students expressed the idea that poetry readings had the potential to help them 'understand' poetry better. As one respondent put it, 'having the poet read his own poems helps the students to hear and visualise the poem'. Such events might also act as an 'incentive' for more students to read poetry: 'it would raise awareness amongst students who don't read poetry that much'. They would help to show that poetry could be 'entertaining'. Poetry readings were deemed necessary because 'this generation needs to be aware of the beauty of poetry'. According to one student, the onus was on the Department of English to use such events in order to 'introduce poetry to people who are not used to it'. A few respondents felt that poetry readings were especially important if the students themselves were given the opportunity to read their own work. One student affirmed that 'If the students write the poems it's better. It encourages students to be artistic and creative in a way that most probably they have never been. Then they get to read it and allow others to absorb and analyse its beauty.' The majority of those respondents who claimed that they would not like the Department to organize poetry readings indicated that they were 'not interested in poetry'. Some of them stated that such events would be 'boring' or that they 'find poetry irrelevant'.

Almost all the students (98.94%) said that they had never attended a poetry slam and the majority of them (62.77%) would not like the Department to organize such events in the future. Once again the most common reasons given for the latter were that 'there isn't much interest from students' and that they 'don't enjoy poetry that much'. Some respondents also mentioned that 'poetry is something which shouldn't be part of a competition'. Those students who were in favour of poetry slams being organized by the Department gave a wide variety of reasons in support of their answer. They mostly agreed with the idea that such events would 'give students a chance to express themselves differently'. Some respondents mentioned that poetry slams were beneficial because 'they bring out new talent'. Poetry slams might lead students to 'enjoy poetry more' and might 'help to understand poetry'. Such events 'would show that poetry could be an enjoyable thing outside the classroom'.

4.1.3 Enjoying and Valuing Poetry

Despite the fact that students did not seem to read poetry for pleasure, Figure 3 shows that the majority of the respondents did enjoy studying (58.51%) and reading poetry (65.96%) when presented with the opportunity to do so, as happens in the classroom. However, the latter figure is not higher than that registered for the enjoyment of reading song lyrics (95.74%). The enjoyment of writing poetry (34.04%) and song lyrics (40.42%) registered much lower figures. The lowest percentage was that registered for the enjoyment of watching videos of people reading poetry (13.83%).
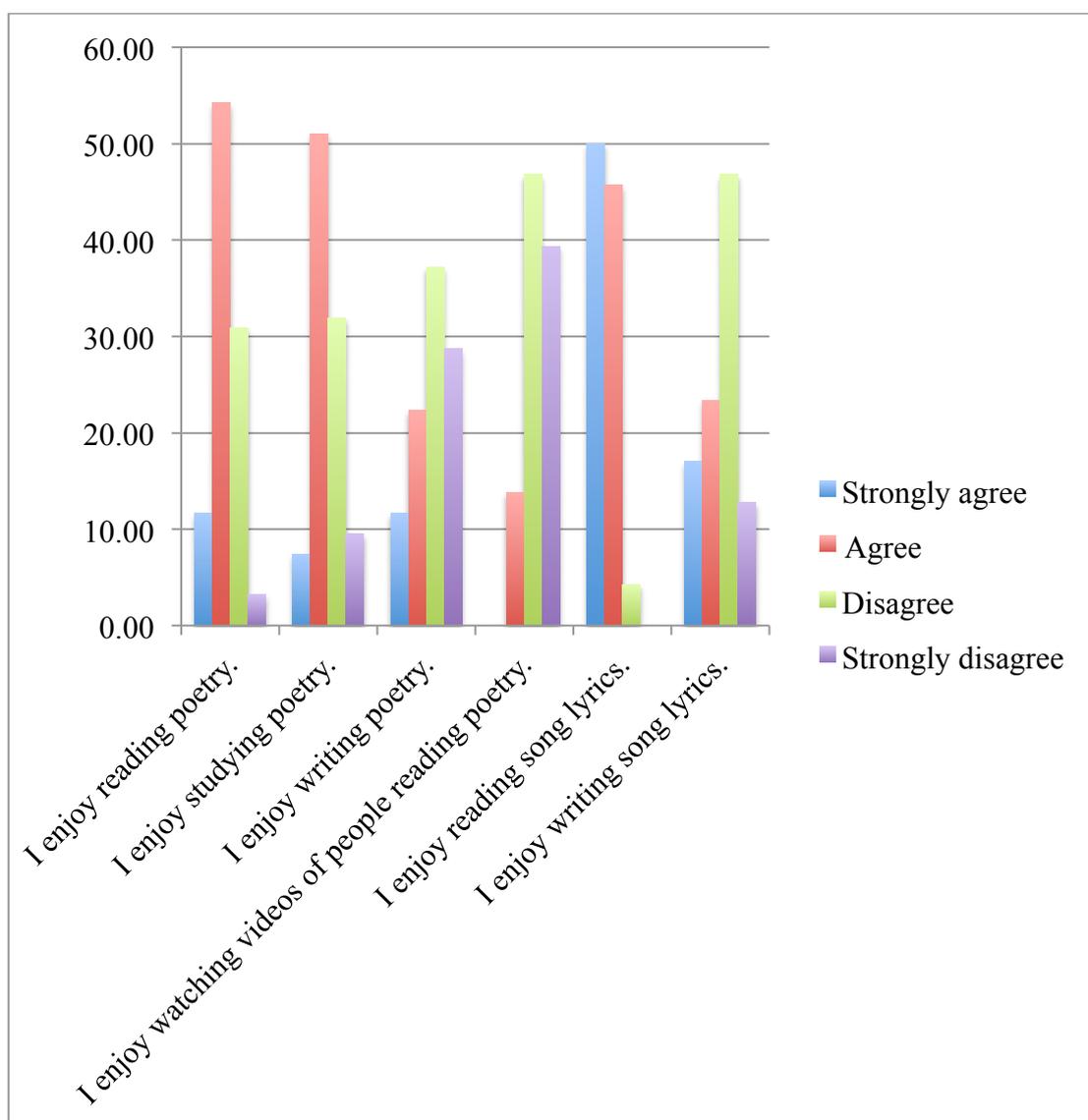
Figure 3 – Students' Enjoyment of Poetry and Song Lyrics

Figure 4 shows that despite the fact that the vast majority of students (84.04%) considered poetry to be important, only about a third of them said they

would read it if it were not part of the syllabus. Moreover, less than 40% of them claimed they would continue to read poetry once they finished their studies at Junior College. In line with the low figure registered for the enjoyment of poetry writing, only around 44% of the respondents stated that they would like to be given the opportunity to write poetry as part of the MC English syllabus.
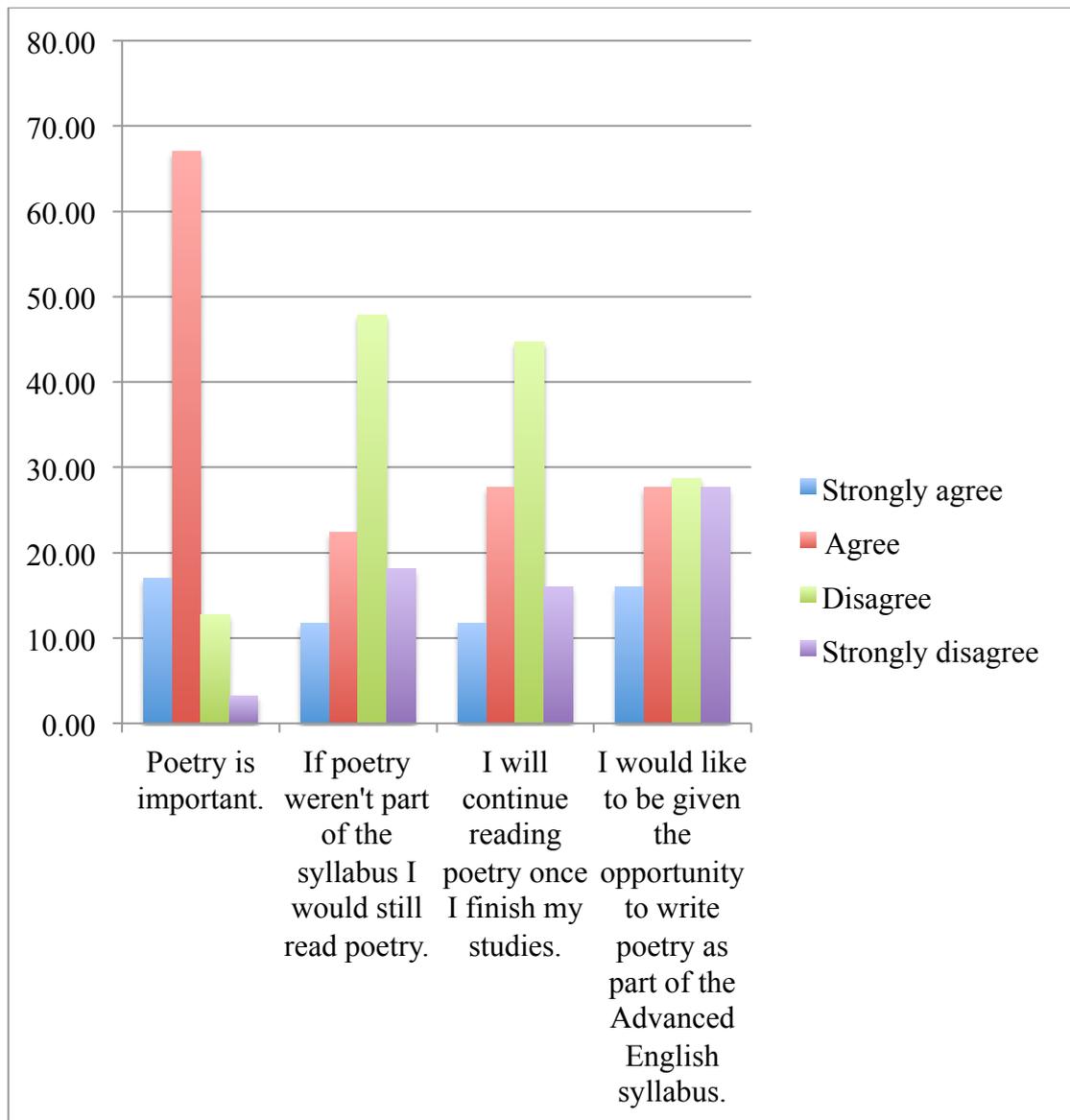
Figure 4 – Students' Views on Poetry, and Poetry Reading and Writing

4.1.4 Choosing Poetry

Students were asked to indicate whether they liked the poems they read during Wilfred Owen lectures, literary criticism seminars and tutorials. As shown by Figure 5, almost 65% of respondents claimed that they liked most or all of Owen's poems.

However, they did not seem to enjoy as much the poems they read in their seminars and tutorials. In fact, less than 42% of students affirmed that they liked all or most of the seminar poems while only around 21% stated the same for the tutorial poems.
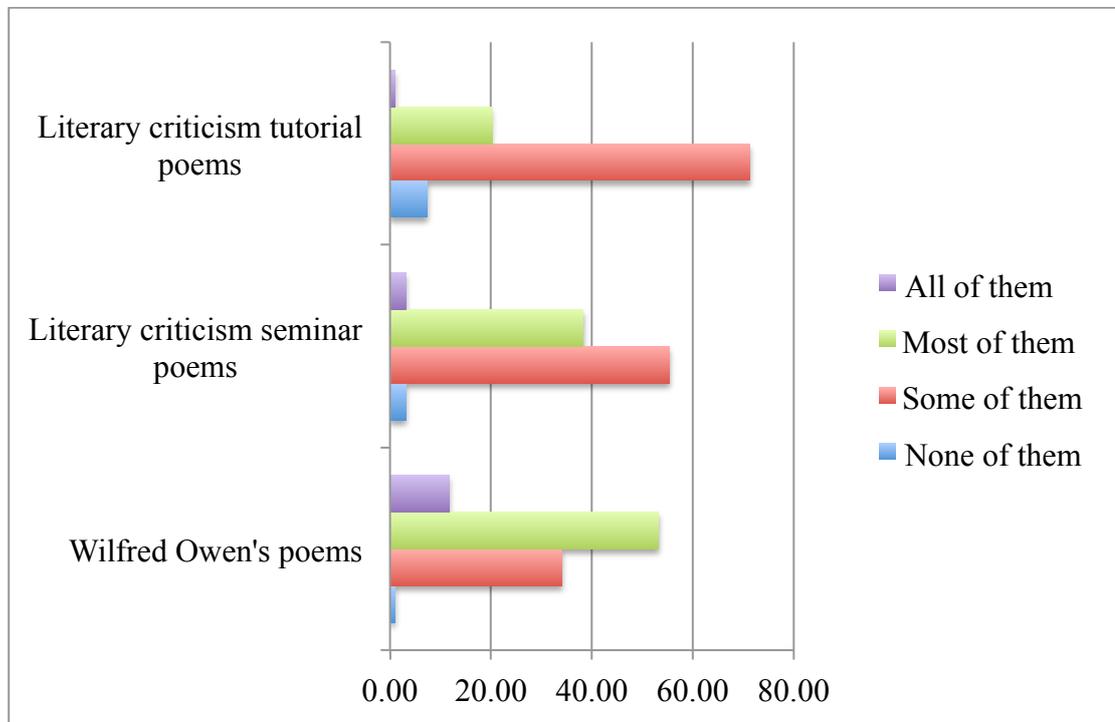
Figure 5 – Students' Enjoyment of Poems Read in Class

When students were asked to indicate how often their teacher encouraged them to suggest poems to discuss during their literary criticism seminars, the vast majority claimed that this never happened (85.11%) while some said it occurred rarely (10.64%) or sometimes (4.26%). None of the respondents mentioned that it took place frequently. When the students were asked whether they would like to be given the opportunity to suggest poems to discuss with their classmates during the literary criticism seminars, the majority asserted that they were in agreement with this (72.34%). The most popular reasons given were that 'the lesson would be more interesting' and that 'this is a good way to involve students in understanding poetry'. One student mentioned that such an opportunity 'would help me understand poetry better because it would be a poem I like'. Given that 'not everyone likes the same poets, so we can get to know more poetry'. One respondent claimed that 'students would like to discuss poems they might see as interesting so as not to think of poetry criticism as something we study for exams but also as something which helps us

learn poems better'. Most of those respondents who did not want to be encouraged to bring poems to class agreed with one of their peers when he claimed that 'I don't read poetry often so I wouldn't have much to suggest'. The others felt that 'the lecturers are more able to choose poems as they know the standards and the level they should have'. One student stated that she disagreed with the idea 'because when we sit for the exam we won't be the ones choosing the unseen poem'.

4.1.5 Studying Poetry

The students were asked to assess their teachers' methodology when teaching Wilfred Owen's work, the literary criticism of poetry, and when conducting a poetry tutorial. Figure 6 shows that the majority of students opted for the top end of the scale (i.e. points 1 and 2) when judging the usefulness of their teachers' methodology for all three kinds of lessons: Owen lectures (67.02%), literary criticism poetry seminars (62.76%), and poetry tutorials (70.21%).
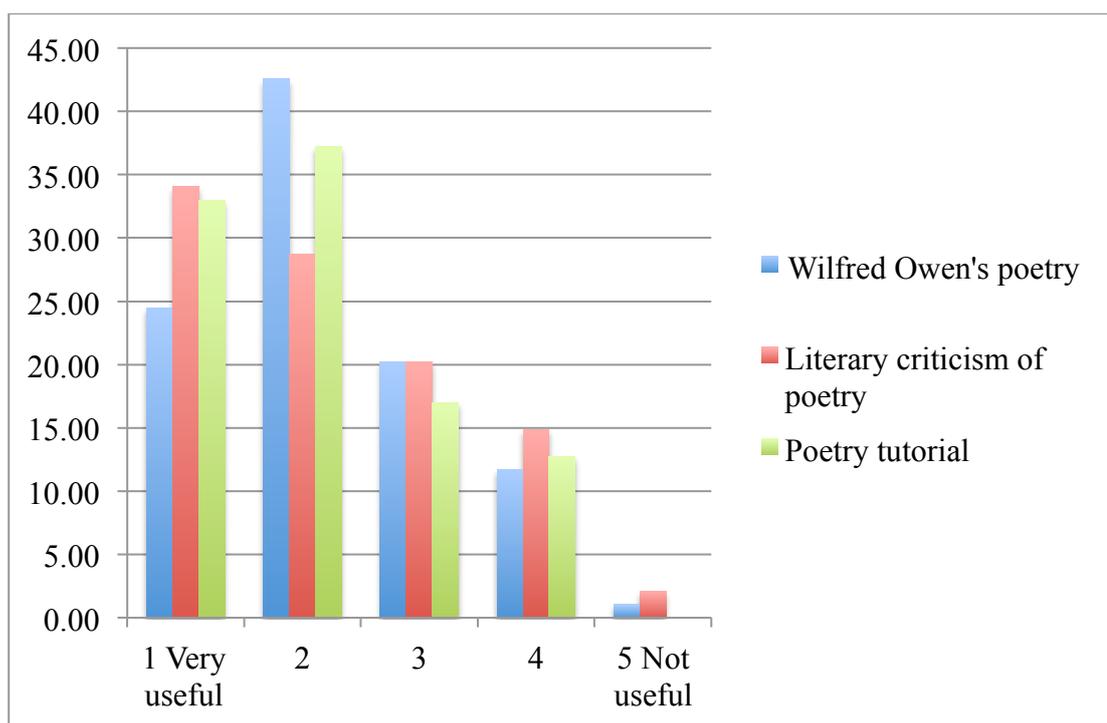
Figure 6 – Students' Views on Usefulness of Teachers' Methodology

When asked whether they enjoyed their poetry lessons, the majority of students replied in the affirmative in relation to Wilfred Owen lectures (48.94%). As shown by Figure 7, the level of ambivalence was higher with respect to poetry seminars and tutorials, with around 44% and 47% respectively affirming that they

enjoyed these lessons 'sometimes'. These figures contrast with the high percentages registered for the usefulness of the methodology employed in poetry seminars and tutorials.
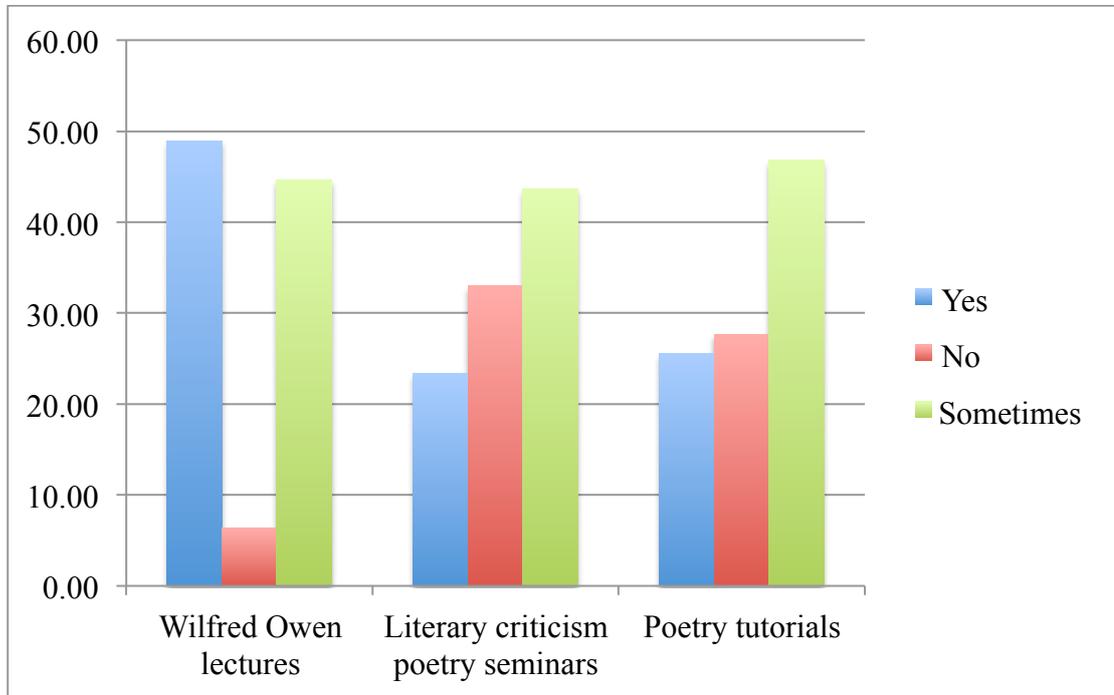
Figure 7 – Students' Enjoyment of Poetry Lessons

When the students were asked whether they were satisfied with what they did in their poetry lessons, the highest levels of satisfaction were registered in relation to Owen lectures (84.04%). Literary criticism seminars (59.58%) and tutorials (67.02%) registered lower percentages. As shown by Figure 8, the highest level of dissatisfaction was registered in relation to poetry seminars (40.42%).
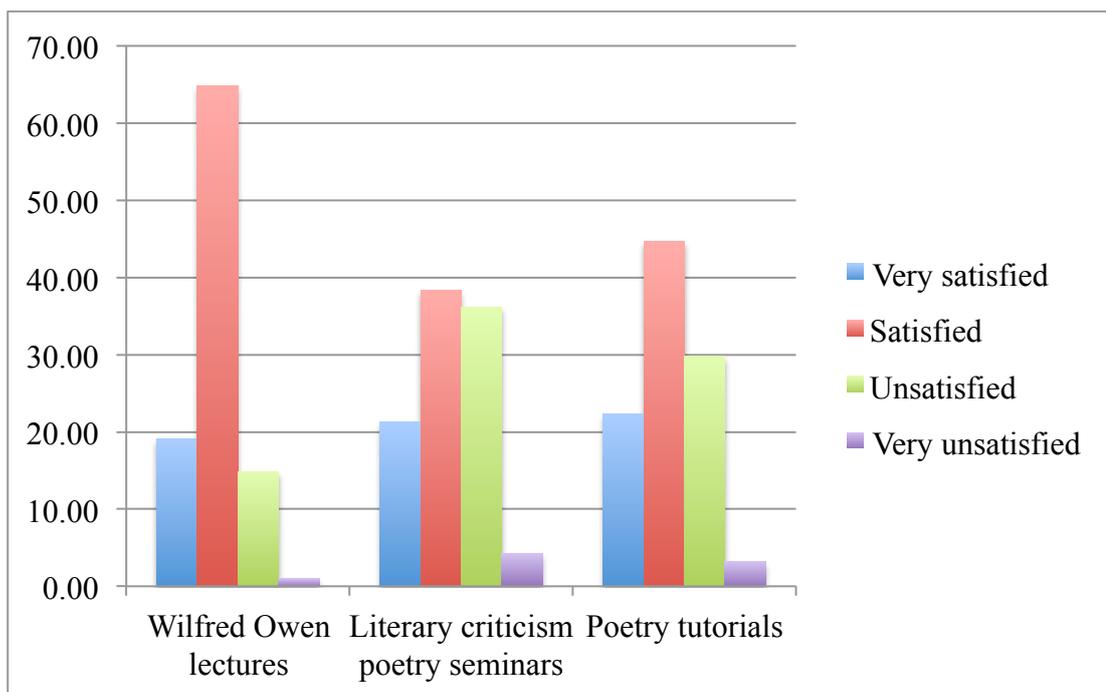
Figure 8 – Students' Satisfaction with Poetry Lesson Activities

The majority of students who claimed to be satisfied with what they did during Owen lectures indicated that 'the poems are clearly explained' and that they were 'given detailed notes on each poem'. These students seemed satisfied because they 'feel that the syllabus is covered well'. A few students mentioned that they were satisfied because 'the teacher explains the poems in a very interesting way' or else 'explains in detail with his heart and soul'. They seemed to consider it important that 'the teacher enjoys the poems, making the lesson more interesting'. One student mentioned that 'the teacher puts us in another world and we experience the poem really well which is really good to remember the poems later'. Those students who were not satisfied with their Owen lecture activities largely affirmed that this was due to the fact that 'we just listen to the lecturer explaining and write down notes'. Students mentioned that 'we don't really discuss the poems; we're just given a summary and notes'. They complained about being 'subjected to the teacher's view and never given a chance to discuss things'. These students were also dissatisfied with the fact that 'most of the poems are covered in a rush and not much time is given to analysis'. The word 'boring' was used by a number of students in relation to what happens in their poetry lessons, with one student stating that 'we focus on studying the poems not appreciating them'. Another student suggested that 'we need to be a bit more passionate when it comes to Wilfred Owen's work'.

Most of those students who felt satisfied with what they did in their literary criticism seminars mentioned that this was because 'the poems are explained well'. As one student put it, 'the teacher helps us dissect the poem and understand the imagery'. Another student expressed a similar idea when she said that 'the teacher digs deep and makes you think what the poet is trying to say'. These students indicated that these seminars had enabled them to improve their 'critical analysis skills' because they 'do plenty of work which prepares us well for the exam'. Those respondents who were not satisfied with their poetry seminar activities mostly criticized the lack of student participation: 'more attention to the students should be given'. One student clarified this idea by saying that 'just explaining the poem to us does not really help us write about it'. Students complained about not being 'shown how to structure an essay' and that they would prefer 'to be given practice not explanations'. Some students claimed that they 'dislike the poems we do in the seminars' and that these seminars were 'boring and repetitive'. A few students stated that they 'still have difficulty understanding poetry' despite what they did during these seminars.

The majority of respondents were satisfied with what they did in a poetry tutorial because 'we go through the poem together and get a full explanation'. These students also valued the fact that 'we get proper feedback on our work' and that 'our teacher gives us good advice on different writing techniques'. Some students suggested that 'the small classes help in understanding the poem better' and indicated that 'we are given the opportunity to discuss the poems'. Those students who felt dissatisfied with poetry tutorial activities largely claimed that this was because of the choice of poems. One student went so far as to point out that 'I've hated every single poem that they've given us. I've been here for two years so that's saying something'. Some students remarked that 'tutorial tasks should be explained beforehand'. A few mentioned that they were not comfortable with tutorials because 'the lecturer just criticizes what I write and nothing else'.

When the respondents were asked whether they would like to see any changes in their poetry lessons, more than half of them stated that these were necessary in the case of literary criticism seminars (57.45%). As shown by Figure 9, Owen lectures (36.17%) and poetry tutorials (46.81%) registered lower percentages of respondents who replied in the affirmative.
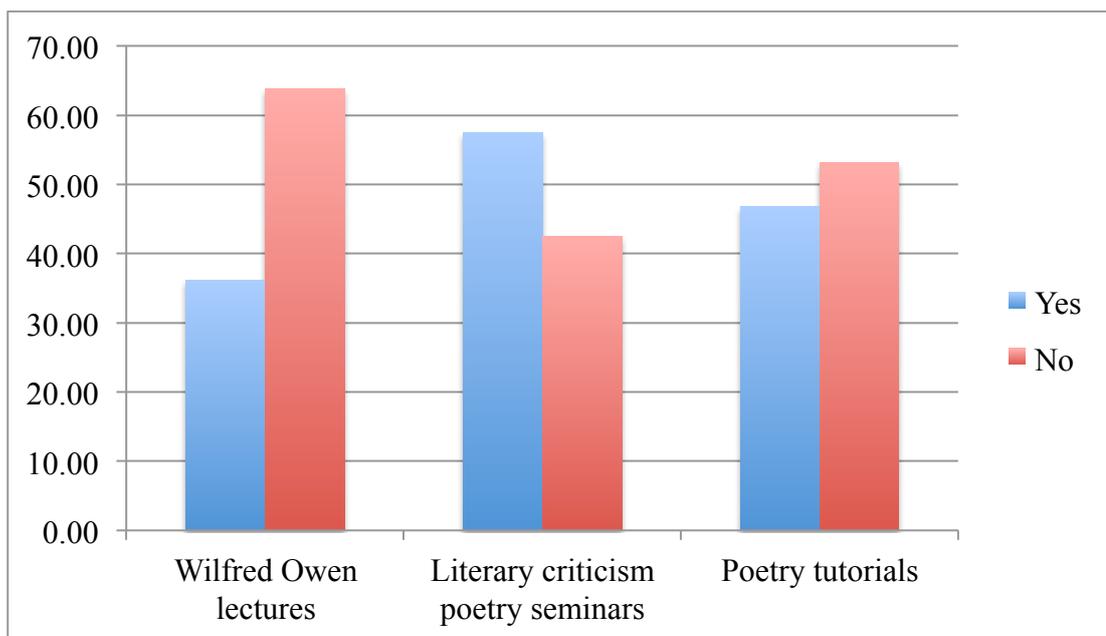
Figure 9 – Need for Changes in Poetry Lessons

Most of the respondents who would like to see changes in Owen lectures agreed that there should be 'more chance for students to have a say'. They indicated that 'students should be involved in the discussion and not just expected to jot down notes'. They suggested that the 'lesson should be in the form of a discussion, not just a lecture'. Some students asked for 'help with how to write a proper essay. Giving us summaries of the poems is not enough'. A few also mentioned that 'showing us videos of WW1 would help us understand the poems better', perhaps in reference to the use of historical footage, documentaries and feature films about the war. Those students who saw no need for any changes in Owen lectures felt 'generally satisfied with the lesson'. They seemed to agree with the idea that 'what we do is pretty interesting and explains the poems' aims well'.

The majority of respondents who felt there was a need for changes in the literary criticism poetry seminars agreed that 'students should be involved much more in the lesson', probably indicating the need for more active approaches that bank on students' contributions. Some of them mentioned that 'the teacher should be open to different ideas that may differ from her own' while some others indicated that 'there should be more poems to choose from'. A number of students thought that there should be 'more focus on essay writing' and that the teacher should make use of 'more examples from past papers'. One student criticized the seminars by saying that 'we don't know how to dismantle a poem and put it back together in an essay'.

Another student felt that 'the whole thing should be done away with. I get why we study Owen, but what's the point of doing crit?' Those respondents who did not see a need for changes to the seminars mentioned that 'the teacher analyses the poems well' or that 'the explanations are well tackled'.

Most of the respondents who requested changes to their poetry tutorials agreed that 'we should be given more explanations of the poems'. Some mentioned that they should be presented with 'more interesting poems' while others asked for 'model essays so that we know how to write better about poetry'. A few students suggested that 'the explanation of the tutorial task should be given beforehand not after we've written the essay'. Those students who saw no need for any changes concurred that 'the tutorials are very helpful'.

4.1.6 Defining a Good Teacher of Poetry

By being asked to complete the sentence 'A good teacher of poetry…', the respondents were encouraged to define the qualities of such a teacher. Almost three quarters of students defined a good teacher of poetry as someone who 'explains a poem in detail and makes students understand what the poet says'. Variations of this definition emphasized the importance of being 'able to explain all hidden details' or 'pass on the message of the poet in a way which is easy to understand'. The respondents seemed to value a teacher who 'helps students understand poems and write essays'. The good teacher of poetry 'describes the poem well by breaking it down piece by piece and explains the details clearly'. Such a teacher 'gives notes and during class explains in detail how to analyse a poem'. This is necessary 'for when the teacher is not present'. In fact, students not only wanted an explanation of the poem; they also appreciated a teacher who 'helps you understand ways of analyzing poems and trains you to be able to analyse them by yourself'. These respondents seemed to think that the teacher's job was to act as a 'guide' who 'explains precisely what is expected of students and teaches them how to approach a poem'. Being shown the right approach was crucial and that was why one student pointed out that a good poetry teacher 'is one that explains to you beforehand how to tackle a certain poem rather than letting you screw your work and explaining to you how bad it is afterwards'.

A fifth of respondents defined a good poetry teacher as someone who 'lets students express their thoughts about the poems and not only expresses his or her

own ideas'. The respondents valued a teacher who 'is open to suggestions and helps students to think outside the box'. Such a teacher 'accepts and listens to various opinions without interrupting students'. This kind of teacher 'helps students arrive at conclusions, without giving away all the details at the beginning'. The respondents seemed to want a teacher who 'listens to students and gives a reason why an answer is good or not'. This kind of teacher 'is someone who is able to explain a poem without excluding the input of the student and who leads students to the answer without simply giving it'. These respondents appreciate a teacher who 'is open to students' interpretations and ideas while also sharing the correct version'. In fact, such a teacher 'lets the students express their views and opinions while training them to criticise better'.

A minority of respondents provided definitions that went beyond the above two views. For them a good poetry teacher 'talks about poetry in relation to one's daily life, feelings and experiences'. He or she 'shows the students the depth that lies within the words of the poems, not only for school purposes but the importance of poetry for life'. This kind of teacher 'treats poetry as an art rather than as part of the syllabus'. Moreover, this teacher 'chooses the poems carefully and tries to increase the students' love for poetry'. Some respondents pointed out that a good teacher of poetry 'needs to be a poet himself' and 'is a lover of poetry'. In this way the teacher 'manages to make students appreciate and enjoy poetry'. These respondents seemed to consider it important that a teacher 'has to inject the love for poetry into students and gives a positive image of poetry not a dreadful lecture'. According to one respondent, a good teacher 'is one that gives students the ability to become the next good teacher'. This required the teacher to be 'passionate about poetry'. This kind of teacher 'is one who can bring the poem to life and makes you feel the same emotions that are expressed in the poem'. These respondents still felt that explanations of poetry were important but for them the good teacher 'is not only able to explain the poem in terms of the syllabus but in a way that students bond with the poem and poetry in general'.

One particular respondent remarked that 'although I've heard about good teachers of poetry, I've certainly had none myself'. This probably indicates that in spite of their different definitions of a good poetry teacher some students were thinking of an ideal teacher not an actual one.

The survey results provided me with a broad picture of the students' attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry and the study of poetry. The students' views about the latter also offered me an indication of what went on during poetry lessons at Junior College. To understand lesson events more fully I conducted a number of classroom observation sessions, the results of which are reported hereunder (see 4.2).

4.2 Classroom Observation

Classroom observation was used as a means of developing an understanding of the typical events that occur during a poetry lesson. Eight literary criticism poetry seminars were observed over the course of four weeks. The reason for which I chose to focus on seminars rather than lectures or tutorials is that both the findings from the pilot study and the student survey indicated that the highest levels of dissatisfaction amongst students were in relation to this type of poetry lesson.

The eight teachers who agreed to take part in this study were responsible for the teaching of literary criticism and poetry at Junior College. They consisted of six males and two females. Each one of them accepted to be observed for one hour and subsequently interviewed. These teachers were on the whole willing to take part in this study but also wary of the observation process since the majority of them had never taken part in something of the sort before. Only two teachers who held a teaching qualification had any experience of classroom observation given that this had formed part of their teacher education course. Due to the absence of classroom observation from any professional development initiatives for Junior College teachers, the remaining six teachers had practically never been observed teaching by their peers or superiors. In order to convince them to collaborate, it was important for me to explain the significance of such a research method and the benefits that could be derived through such a study. It was perhaps indicative of their distance from the social sciences that some of the teachers doubted the value of such research, one of them questioning whether a PhD in Education is as challenging as one in English Literature.

During all eight lessons the class layout was the same, that is, the teacher's desk was situated in front of the whiteboard with three rows of chairs facing it. Most of the teachers did not ask the students to sit in a particular place in class and it was noticed that the students spread out all over the classroom, leaving many empty chairs in between. Only one teacher asked his students to change seats and form pairs

and groups. Apart from this teacher, all the others seemed most comfortable standing at the front of the class beside their desk.

4.2.1 Lesson Pro forma

Table 4 includes the information collected immediately before every observed lesson. This information consists of each teacher's bio data and indicates what each observed lesson focused on and how many students were present.

Table 4 – Lesson and Teacher Information							
Teacher	Gender	Teaching Experience	Teaching Qualification	Highest Qualification	Lesson Focus	Students	
						M	F
A	M	42	None	MA English Literature	'Wind' – Ted Hughes	3	10
B	M	40	None	MA English Literature	'Dry August Burned' – Walter de la Mare	3	12
C	M	39	P.G.C.E.	PhD English Literature	'The Jaguar' – Ted Hughes	6	9
D	M	7	None	PhD English Literature	'Silver' – Walter de la Mare	2	12
E	M	2	None	PhD English Literature	'The Voice' – Thomas Hardy	6	10
F	F	35	P.G.C.E.	MEd Applied Linguistics	'Husband to Wife: Party Going' – Brian Jones	4	9
G	M	20	None	MA English Literature	'To an Athlete Dying Young' – A.E. Housman	3	11
H	F	33	None	MA English Literature	'The Whitsun Weddings' – Philip Larkin	4	10

Despite having high qualifications in English Literature, only two teachers held a teaching qualification. The poems they focused on in the observed lessons were

strictly canonical and penned by dead white male British poets. On average each class was made up of 14 students, the maximum number never exceeding 16 while the minimum being no less than 12.

4.2.2 Lesson Notes

The notes I took during the observed lessons show that all the teachers apart from one engaged in a line-by-line analysis of the poem, with the analytical process being mentioned on a number of occasions. For example, one teacher launched his explanation of the poem by saying, 'Let's take it to bits' (Teacher A, henceforth TA) while a colleague of his informed the class that 'For poetry you need analytical skills. That's what you're meant to take from crit' (TF). Another teacher used the metaphor of digging when talking about the analytical process and told students, 'Go deeper as I always tell you to. Remember what I said about the onion' (TE). Despite complaining in the interviews (see 4.3.14) about the fact that students look at poetry as having a hidden meaning, in the observed lessons at least half the teachers seemed to be using the analytical approach in order to arrive at one specific interpretation. For example, at the beginning of the lesson one teacher asked her class, 'What do you think is it about? What's the meaning?' (TH) while a colleague of hers told the students, 'I'd like you to do it, to find things in the poem' (TB). In some of these lessons it was implied that analytical skills take time to develop and that poetry is a difficult genre: 'Don't expect to understand a poem immediately. You have to read and read' (TC). While explaining to the class a particular image from the poem, one teacher said, 'This is why poetry is so damn difficult' (TA).

In these lessons the language-based model of teaching seemed to be given a lot of importance in terms of the teacher explaining the effectiveness of the poet's choice of diction and imagery. One teacher informed his class, 'Poetry is language. I never considered myself a teacher of poetry but a teacher of language' (TA). Despite the fact that most of the teachers emphasised the importance of the personal growth model in the teaching of literature when interviewed (see 4.3.12), aspects of this approach were noted in only half the observed lessons. One teacher told the class that 'Poetry is not only about meaning but also about the experience, feelings' (TD) while a colleague of his mentioned an idea which he later repeated in the interview: 'Don't think but feel; if you think you're lost' (TA). Only a few teachers sought to actively encourage the students to relate the poem to their own lives and experiences.

Some teachers selected poems typical of examination past papers and one teacher informed students that 'It's important for you to be able to analyse this kind of poem' (TH). Students were often reminded that these analytical skills were needed in order to pass their examination: 'Remember that you'll be doing this on your own in the exam; I won't be there to help you' (TF). However, as shown by the results of the events checklist (see 4.2.3) teacher talk predominated over all other lesson events.

4.2.3 Events Checklist

Table 5 and Figure 10 show the frequency of events recorded during the observed lessons by means of an events checklist. Each event is defined in Appendix 11. Teacher explanations occurred 78% of the time in contrast to student initiations, which occurred for only about 20% of the time. The latter is very close to the frequency of the teachers' references to the examination (17%).

Table 5 – Lesson Events (%)		
Teacher	Explains	78.01
	Open question	32.65
	Closed question	46.13
	Responds	02.96
	Reads aloud	18.77
	Diagnostic follow-up	12.08
	Writes notes on the board	03.82
	Invites pair discussion	01.42
	Invites group discussion	02.14
	Encourages use of worksheet	02.14
	Invites silent reading	02.31
	Refers to examination	17.11
Student	Initiates	19.78
	Responds	40.54
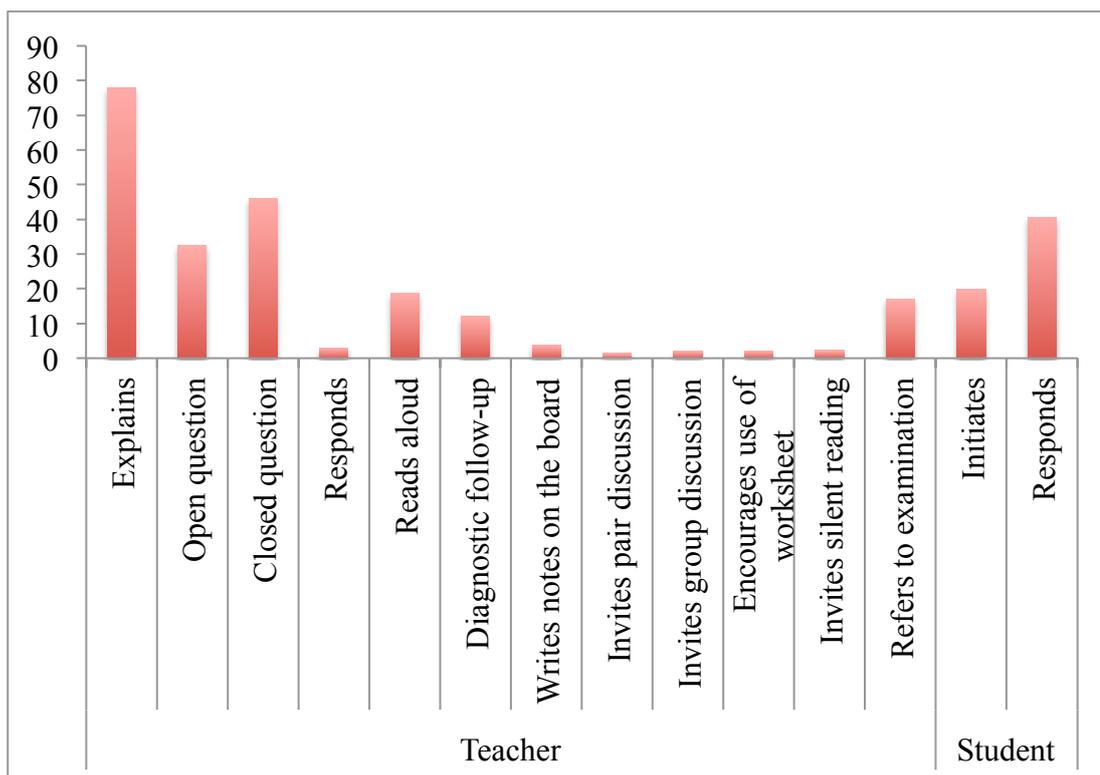
Figure 10 – Lesson Events

4.2.4 Rating Scale

Table 6 shows the collective results of the rating scale completed at the end of each observed lesson. Given that it was not possible to ensure inter-reliability by having more than one rater present in the classroom, these findings must be deemed somewhat subjective.

Table 6 – Results of Rating Scale		No evidence	Limited evidence	Some evidence	Clear evidence
Lesson Introduction	The session began on time.	6	0	0	2
	The teacher identified the anticipated learning outcomes for the session.	2	3	1	2
Planning and Organisation	The teacher related the session to previous sessions and set it in the overall context of the syllabus component.	3	2	1	2

	The teacher set out the structure of the session at the start.	4	2	1	1
	The session appeared to be well-planned and organized.	0	4	2	2
Model/Approach	The teacher appeared to use one specific poetry teaching model/approach.	1	2	0	5
	The teacher used a blend of poetry teaching models/approaches.	5	0	2	1
	The teacher encouraged students to adopt one specific reading of the poem.	2	0	4	2
	The teacher encouraged students to adopt multiple readings of the poem.	2	4	0	2
	The teacher encouraged students to come up with their personal response to the poem.	1	4	1	2
Student Participation	The teacher encouraged students to work independently of his/her involvement.	3	4	0	1
	The students' participation appeared to be carefully planned.	3	4	0	1
Use of Learning Resources	The teacher made use of a wide range of good quality resources (e.g. book, pack, handouts).	0	7	0	1
	Visual resources	8	0	0	0

	were used (e.g. pictures, OHTs, PowerPoint, video).				
	Aural resources were used (e.g. audio recordings).	8	0	0	0
	ICT was well integrated in the lesson.	8	0	0	0
Overall Style and Ambience	The teacher seemed confident in delivery.	0	0	3	5
	The teacher conveyed enthusiasm.	0	3	2	3
	The teacher appeared to have a good rapport with the students.	0	3	3	2
	The teacher seemed to have good presentation skills.	0	4	2	2
	The teacher maintained eye contact with the students.	0	2	4	2
	The teacher appeared to be sensitive to the students' mood.	0	5	1	2
	The teacher appeared to have strong subject knowledge.	0	0	3	5
	The teacher encouraged student interaction and communication.	1	3	3	1
	The students seemed attentive.	0	5	2	1
	The students appeared to be engaged during the lesson.	0	6	1	1
Lesson Conclusion	The session ended on time.	8	0	0	0
	The teacher summed up by	2	4	0	2

	referring to the learning outcomes achieved.				
	The teacher set work or reading to be done by the students in their study time.	6	0	1	1

One of the most salient findings from the rating scale is that five of the observed teachers appeared to use one particular poetry teaching method or approach rather than a blend. Six teachers appeared to encourage students to arrive at one specific reading of the poem rather than encouraging them to provide multiple readings of it. Only three teachers encouraged students to come up with their own personal response to the poem and in only one lesson was it clear that the students were being encouraged to work autonomously of the teacher's involvement. Almost all the teachers did not use any learning resources apart from a printed copy of the poem. Only half of them encouraged student interaction and communication. In six of the observed lessons there was little evidence of student engagement.

Classroom observation allowed me to develop an insight into how each one of the eight teachers who participated in this study actually delivered a poetry lesson. The semi-structured interview that I conducted following each classroom observation session was partly meant to consolidate my understanding of their poetry pedagogy.

4.3 Interviews
Semi-structured interviews were held with each of the eight observed teachers, as well as with a sample of 15 students, and with the chief examiner and syllabus developer for MC English. Moreover, two focus group interviews were held, each with groups of four students. Three of the semi-structured interviews were held with male students (SB, SI, SK) while all focus group interviewees were female. Both kinds of interview focused primarily on exploring in further depth the attitudes, beliefs and practices of the interviewees in relation to poetry and the study of poetry. An analysis of the interview data led to the identification of a number of broad categories that constitute the sections hereunder.

4.3.1 Defining Poetry

The majority of teachers were somewhat taken aback when asked what they understood by the term 'poetry'. Perhaps this was due to the notion that 'you cannot really define it a priori because once you do that you take away that which is singular in poetry and therefore that which goes beyond categorisation…that which goes beyond the conceptual' (TD). However, all the teachers seemed to agree that poetry was a special use of language characterised by conciseness and acted as a form of artistic expression. One teacher claimed that 'poetry doesn't have to be a form of defamiliarisation though it often is' (TD). His colleague explained that 'nothing is more ridiculous and banal and everyday than a pumpkin but poetry is the kind of fairy godmother that transforms it into the golden carriage' (TA). As a 'distillation of language', poetry was considered able to 'express something that…touches you so deeply and it's almost impossible to put into words' (TG). Poetry was 'an outburst of feeling' that required 'inspiration' (TF) and by means of it readers 'achieve deep insights both cognitive and emotional' (TC). As 'a special use of words', poetry was 'a means of contacting the deepest layers of our minds and hearts and this is why it still has its magic' (TC). For one particular teacher, poetry 'allows you to be part creator' (TH). In a way 'poetry more than any other form of literature gives you this freedom of being creative yourself because you are rewriting' a poem when 'analysing' (TH) it. Just as poetry was deemed special so was the poet, one teacher saying that poets were 'more clever…more perspicacious' (TH), and another confessing, 'I believe that some poets are a bit crazy' (TF). The only published poet in this group of interviewees defined poetry in more prosaic terms. For him, 'a poem is a unit of time' and in his opinion before exploring content it helped students to think of poetry 'in terms of time and adjusting that time to the space of words and rhythms and syllables and feet' (TE).

Almost all the students considered poetry to be 'an expression of feelings' (Student B, henceforth SB) characterised by a particular structure and which sometimes contained rhyme and rhythm. For four students poetry was 'more artistic than prose…and it's usually a bit less literal than prose' (SA). In both focus groups there was agreement that poetry was 'written in an artistic way' (S1B) and that 'you can use it to express feelings' (S1D). Poetry consisted of 'raw feelings on a page' so 'you can't really lie when you're writing a poem' (SC). It engaged in defamiliarisation because it 'is a means through which poets make something which

is perhaps not that beautiful appear beautiful' (SE). Probably due to its 'abstract' (SB) nature, poetry allowed the poet to avoid saying something in a 'straightforward' manner, instead saying it 'in a different way [which] people can understand from many different perspectives' (SH). As a means of expressing emotions 'that you can't describe in other words' (SJ), poetry enabled the reader to 'understand how someone's feeling and relate to it' (SF). Poetry was 'a medium through which [poets] can explain what they're feeling' (SM) and readers read poetry 'in such a way that you can actually make the emotions tangible' (SJ), in the process giving readers 'a different meaning to what they're feeling' (SH). Besides expressing emotions, poetry was also 'a way of reflecting your thoughts' (SK) and 'send[ing] out a message' (SN). For six students poetry was an impressive form of creativity and one interviewee in particular described it as 'very very intelligent' (SO).

When asked to explain what he understood by 'poetry', the examiner claimed that it is 'very hard' for him to define poetry without thinking of a range of critical theorists who have considered this issue in depth. Poetry 'is that which is, precisely, opaque to this kind of question, or to an interview like this one'. In attempting 'to answer this question in a very personal way…beyond all the practised answers', the examiner affirmed that poetry is what 'shows us more powerfully than anything else that not everything in language is reducible to algorithmic instrumentality'. He also acknowledged that 'At the same time, nothing is more efficient, in this world of character-counting expression and even by that measure, than poetry. Poetry, in my view, lives through that paradox and is that value'.

4.3.2 Reading Poetry

Only three teachers mentioned that they enjoyed reading 'some poetry just for pleasure' (TB), the others indicating that they opted for prose. One teacher claimed that he does not read a lot of poetry for pleasure 'because things here can get so intense that you don't want to sort of imprison yourself in this academic world' (TA). A colleague of his concurred with this idea, saying that he preferred prose 'probably because poetry requires a more intense and a more engaged reading' (TD). In fact, five of the teachers indicated that if they had to choose between reading and listening to poetry they would prefer the former because when they read it they could do so at their 'own pace' (TB) and 'concentrate more' (TC). According to one teacher,

'poetry does demand repeated raids on the inarticulate and I think reading for that is necessary' (TC).

According to those teachers who mostly read poetry for work purposes, teaching gave them the opportunity to read a lot of poetry. As one teacher put it, 'professionally I can't avoid it' (TA). The latter also mentioned that he enjoyed 'reading it aloud especially to an audience…we're very fortunate here that we have been granted a captive audience…these poor devils can't do anything about it' (TA). Despite the fact that these teachers mostly read poetry because of their job they still enjoyed it. However, two of them indicated that their awareness of examination realities did sometimes mar the experience. They ended up 'look[ing] at the poem in more pedagogical terms' (TE) and 'when you become over technical about something and you have to reduce it to a certain level…it's like you lose the joy of it' (TG). This kind of analytical approach to poetry seemed to undermine some teachers' motivation to read it for pleasure: 'the problem is that since I've been teaching and doing poetry mostly for crit I've become too analytical I find and whenever I read a poem I don't just read it for pleasure' (TF).

Just like the teachers, the interviewed students seemed to share a preference for prose, with only four of them mentioning that they read any poetry for pleasure. One student pointed out, 'I prefer prose because poems it's more fun to discuss than to read' (SA). To explain why they did not read any poetry the students claimed that 'it just isn't in me' (SG), that they 'don't know…where to look for good poetry' (SH), and that they 'find it boring…I just don't enjoy reading it…it frustrates me' (SM). Similarly, in one of the focus groups, students expressed the idea that they only read poetry at school 'because at home I don't have the patience to figure out what the poem means' (S1A). Reading poetry at school seemed somewhat easier for them because 'at least I have the teacher there to explain it' (S1B). They shared the belief that 'there's always an explanation to the poem and sometimes you might not see it. The teacher knows how it is' (S1D). Some of the students who only read poetry for study purposes claimed that 'I have to study poetry but I don't enjoy reading it' (SM), one of them admitting that 'if it wasn't for school I wouldn't read too much poetry…because I think I've always thought of it as being academic, sort of it's work' (SF). However, this student did confess that 'maybe if I look at published poetry from another perspective and not as something that has to do with school maybe I would read more' (SF). Another student took a somewhat opposite

perspective when she said that 'I'm also finding poems that I really like through studying so then I look them up and look up [the poet's] works' (SC). This link between studying and enjoying poetry was also made by a student who admitted not to reading a lot of poetry but finding it 'interesting' because one got 'to analyse the thoughts of [the] poet' (SB).

Less than half the interviewed students declared that their poetry lessons had encouraged them to read more poetry for pleasure. One student stated that 'if I hadn't attended these lessons I wouldn't have looked up poetry for personal pleasure' (SB) while another student explained that 'the good thing about not knowing what poem you're going to study is that if you study this poem and you like it you can actually look up other poems by the same poet' (SD).

Apart from two students whose poetry reading habits were not affected because 'I've always done it so it hasn't really had an impact on me' (SJ), most of the interviewed students asserted that their lessons had not encouraged them to read poetry for pleasure. One student claimed that this had not happened 'because I'm not interested in it' while another student said, 'I think I only read the poems I need to study. I don't like reading poetry for pleasure. I don't really understand poetry' (SN). For other students it was either because they preferred reading prose or else 'because most of us just feel fed up with the number of poems we have to study' (SH). The latter student also pointed out that in the future she would probably read poetry but 'I don't think it's thanks to my lessons at Junior College; it's just because I like to read. So if I come across something I'll read it but I don't think I'll go out and buy a poetry book' (SH). In both focus groups there was agreement on the idea that the students' lessons at Junior College did not encourage them to read poetry for pleasure. One student claimed that 'it's not the kind of the thing that appeals to me. When I was younger it was easier…but now I find it really confusing and you have to analyse it' (S1D). Another interviewee suggested that analysis was partly to blame for this: 'that's what makes it hard in a way. You're trying to understand what's hidden inside' (S2A). The students seemed put off by the idea that 'in crit it's all about analysing the structure, the diction, the imagery. We rely on what the poet is trying to pass on to us' (S2B).

The examiner expressed dissatisfaction with students' ability to read poetry 'because quite simply they haven't read enough'. He explained how at university he gives first year students the names of five poets for them to put in chronological

order. The students 'can't do that'. Despite the fact that this is 'a classificatory exercise…not an exercise in gauging students' suppleness of response or range of responses', the examiner considered it a 'relevant' way of assessing how much students have read. Due to the suspicion that students do not read enough poetry at post-secondary level, the examiner claimed that 'probably it would be better if we had a text that would allow them to sample different kinds of poetry'. This 'could possibly be in many ways better, especially if it's well structured in terms of exposing students to poetry's different forms, tonalities as well'. However, the examiner was aware that this would have to happen 'within a specific pedagogical venture'. A system whereby students would be encouraged to read a wide variety of poetry would have to rely on 'the assumption that the people standing up in front of a class of students are able to respond sensitively and with discernment to the expectations implied by this newer system which would allow them to look at a broader range of poetry'. He confessed that 'the current system we have is pedagogically safer. It's not necessarily better'.

4.3.3 Favourite Poets

When asked who their favourite poets were, the teachers mentioned a total of 21 names. However, the list is inflated by the nine poets mentioned by one particular teacher (TE). As shown by Table 7, if the list of mostly contemporary poets mentioned by TE is not taken into account then it is clear that the majority of teachers expressed a preference for strictly canonical poets. This seems to run counter to the recommendation that contemporary poetry should be taught in order 'to explore and celebrate the languages and voices of one's times' (Retallack & Spahr, 2006, p. 11). Philip Larkin was mentioned by half the teachers and this was probably due to the fact that up to a few years ago *The Whitsun Weddings* was on the MC English syllabus. The only other two poets who were mentioned more than once were Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney.

Table 7 – Teachers' Favourite Poets	
All teachers (excluding TE)	TE
Philip Larkin	Ted Hughes
Ted Hughes	Seamus Heaney
Seamus Heaney	Paul Muldoon
T. S. Eliot	Don Patterson
William Shakespeare	Elizabeth Bishop
Robert Browning	Sylvia Plath

Alfred Tennyson Paul Celan William Wordsworth Khalil Gibran Emily Bronte Emily Dickinson Jorge Luis Borges	Langston Hughes George Szirtes Derek Walcott

The students mentioned a total of nine favourite poets and all of these poets were ones the students read during literary criticism seminars or else ones they encountered in secondary school. Shakespeare was mentioned six times while Ted Hughes and Wilfred Owen were mentioned three times. Tennyson, Byron and Robert Frost were mentioned twice each. Other poets were John Betjeman, T. S. Eliot and Alexander Pope.

4.3.4 Reading Song Lyrics

Due to the debate concerning the similarities and differences between poetry and song lyrics (Zapruder, 2012), the students were asked whether they read song lyrics and whether they considered these to be a form of poetry. Despite admitting to not reading a lot of poetry for pleasure, the majority of the students did imply that they 'prefer reading lyrics rather than reading poetry' (SI). One student stated that she 'rarely read[s] lyrics', doing so only if 'I don't understand a part of a song and I want to clarify it' (SN). Five students agreed that lyrics were a means of understanding the song and some went so far as to say that 'the major importance is in the lyrics' (SA). One student affirmed that 'if you don't know the lyrics of the songs that you hear…I think it's like futile listening to the song' (SE). Another interviewee clarified that this only applied to songs 'that have a meaning…songs which have no meaning have nothing in them' (SH).

There was a lack of agreement among the students on whether song lyrics could be considered poetry. Two thirds of them seemed to think that poetry and lyrics were 'extremely alike' (SA) if not 'the same' (SB). For these students, poetry and lyrics shared 'a lot of similar qualities', including the fact that 'they both have that sort of metaphorical way of getting to you and putting the meaning first' (SA); they both 'have a special meaning' (SI). In fact, according to one student, 'it's more the content of something that makes it poetry than the way it's written' (SJ). This emphasis on meaning was also made when they talked about their favourite

musicians: 'their lyrics are poetry because of its meanings and what it expresses' (SK). One student seemed to think that 'lyrics is just putting music to the poem' (SC), however, some of the others did qualify their statements by saying that in order for lyrics to be poetry 'they mustn't be superficial'; a song needs to 'to have a deep meaning…it has to touch your heart…it has to touch you in a way and make you reflect more' (SK). In fact, for four students 'not all lyrics are poetry because…some of it is rubbish'; they could only be considered poetry if 'written in an artistic manner…a beautiful art that is done through words' (SE). One student explained this by saying that if the songwriter paid attention to 'the way the words are placed and how the sound is connected to the words, then yes it can be considered as a kind of poetry' (SO). This meant that 'there are lyrics which are more poetic than others' (SF) and musicians who were more adept at writing such poetic lyrics. Similarly, in both focus groups students agreed on the idea that lyrics that could be considered poetry 'have a meaning and they give out a message' (S2D). However, they seemed to believe that 'lyrics are not always so meaningful' (S2B).

Those students who indicated that lyrics could not be considered poetry claimed that lyrics were 'not really meant to be understood…for their meaning' (SH); 'they're just commercialism' (SD). Since 'poetry…has more of a deeper meaning than song lyrics' (SH), these students tended to associate it with school: 'when I hear a song I don't think of it as a poem…it's not like the poems we do here at school' (SN). Poetry was described as 'something we do at school…I don't see lyrics as poetry' (SM).

4.3.5 Listening to Poetry

Despite the fact that all the teachers preferred reading poetry, half of them mentioned that they also enjoyed listening to it, one teacher saying that listening to poetry had a 'spellbinding effect' (TC). Another teacher claimed that as a creative writer listening to poetry played a crucial role for him because it was 'both a creative exercise and a receptive exercise' (TE).

The majority of the students affirmed that they preferred reading poetry rather than listening to it. The former provided students with 'more time to analyse it' and was something they could do at their 'own pace' (SB). According to four students, listening to poetry made them feel 'a bit confused' (SC) and they indicated that they 'don't want to have someone else reading it…it's more hands on when you're

reading it' (SF). One student explained that 'when someone explains it to me I don't really mind but if someone had to read it they need to have my very same pace to actually get me really into it' (SJ). Another student remarked, 'I prefer reading it because I can analyse it myself rather than depending on someone else' (SO). The idea that it was only by reading a poem that one could really understand it was voiced by eight students, who pointed out that 'it's better to read it in order to grasp the true meaning of it' (SN). In one of the focus groups the same idea was suggested: 'when you read something you can understand more clearly than when you just listen to it' (S1D).

Those students who indicated that they preferred listening to poetry maintained that this enhanced their experience of poetry. One student stated, 'if I read it I'm trying to understand it…if I'm listening to it I listen to maybe the rhythm, the rhyme scheme' (SD). Another student claimed, 'I prefer listening because sometimes when I'm reading a poem…I have the problem of trying to figure out the meaning' (SI). This apparently happened because reading poetry seemed to be an activity that he associated with analysis: 'in my mind I'll be looking at one verse and trying to see what this verse actually means' (SI). Similarly, a focus group student mentioned that 'when I read poetry I usually tend to focus on what the poet is trying to say but when I hear someone reading it it's more passionate. I think I would see it more vividly and it helps me to understand the poem even more, so I think I prefer listening to it' (S2B).

4.3.6 Writing Poetry for Pleasure

Only one of the teachers described himself as a creative writer (TE), having published a number of poetry collections. Two teachers claimed that they had never written any poetry, with one of them exclaiming 'writing no!' (TF). She also admitted that 'when I was young I did try once' (TF). The other five teachers declared that they had some experience of writing poetry. They indicated that they either had done it 'ages ago' (TC) or else they did it occasionally or 'just once every two or three years' (TD). One teacher stated that he 'used to write but nowadays I don't have time' (TB) while his colleague confessed that 'no one has seen my poetry. I think it's something so intimate that I haven't shown it, except for probably my wife' (TG). Another teacher twice declared, 'I'm not a poet though I have written a few things' (TD). One teacher remarked that writing poetry 'gives you a tremendous

thrill while you're doing it…it's a need…it's the overflowing of the cup' (TA). However, he admitted that he had never sought to publish any of his poetry.

Only two interviewed students claimed they had never written any poetry, while another four students said that their sole experience of poetry writing had been when they were very young, most probably in primary school. This meant that the remaining nine students still wrote poetry sometimes, most of them indicating that they did so because they enjoyed it. Five students indicated that poetry was a means of self-expression: 'I write poetry just to express something that I couldn't express in writing prose…I write when I can't have any other alternative, when the feelings are just for poetry' (SD). According to one student, 'poetry is such a stress relief… there are certain things that as an individual I don't like to talk about…that's when I write poetry' (SE). Six students affirmed that there were other advantages to writing poetry, such as improving one's writing skills: 'obviously it helped me with writing in general so I still do it sometimes when I'm inspired' (SB). This view probably emerged from their awareness of poetry's creative use of language: 'when I actually write it I think of a way in which I could sound more beautiful, more metaphoric, original or artistic' (SF). This was so important for one particular student that he admitted, 'sometimes I get a bit…frustrated that I can't get what I want to say into a good poem' (SK).

Those students who had never written any poetry maintained that this was 'because I'm not interested in it' (SM) or 'because I'm still learning how to really appreciate it' (SO). In the case of the latter she also pointed out that she was afraid she would 'find it hard' (SO). One of the students who had stopped writing poetry claimed that she found it difficult to 'get the muse' (SN) while another interviewee asserted that 'it's just not really my thing' (SA).

4.3.7 Writing Poetry as Part of the Course

Only one teacher was in full agreement with the idea that students should be encouraged to write poetry as part of their MC English course, saying that 'it would contribute by way of having the students empathise with the act of writing itself' (TE). In his opinion, poetry writing 'helps students to empathise with the poem itself… it's all about reading the work from the inside. I think a creative component would allow students to do that' (TE). He explained this idea by means of the metaphor of looking at stained glass windows from inside a cathedral: 'I sometimes

tell my students that if you're in a cathedral and you walk around it and you see the stained glass, those nuances of shape and colour, you can appreciate that whole experience. If you go outside the church and look again at the stained glass windows you'll see nothing' (TE). The idea that poetry writing was beneficial for students was also expressed by a teacher who, despite considering it unsuitable for assessment, felt said that 'it's something which can be very valuable because in trying to write poetry you're coming face to face with what poetry is' (TD).

Half the teachers claimed that it would be useless to teach poetry writing: 'I don't think we're here to produce poets…assuming that a poet is born not made it would be a huge waste of time barking up wrong trees' (TA). According to one teacher, 'if you don't have it in the first place it's…useless' (TC); he went on to admit, 'I don't expect the majority to have it' (TC). Another teacher stated that 'it might be unfair at this stage to assess students on their poetry writing because I believe that not everyone is born a poet' (TD).

Despite agreeing in principle with the idea of engaging students in poetry writing activities as part of the curriculum, the chief examiner expressed himself rather cautiously about the conditions that would make such a situation possible. He stated that poetry writing 'should not be up for assessment' and should feature in class only if its teaching 'contracts itself to being excellent'. In his opinion this 'requires the confidence and reassurance of knowing that the people standing in front of students are ready, qualified, disposed, trained to teach like that'. He would also 'need the reassurance that those same people can respond well to poetry, whatever that means and however you want to gauge that'. The examiner considered it 'very worrying…that there aren't as many area-specific opportunities for teacher training that would help us to be more reasonably reassured'. He claimed not to be convinced that current teacher training programmes are providing trainees with 'recurrently reinvigorated means to get teachers up to speed with current thinking in terms of teaching poetry', thus leading to 'undertrained' teachers who might lack the 'curiosity' to enhance their knowledge and skills in relation to poetry and its teaching. According to the examiner, in the A-level poetry classroom 'we want a specialist kind of teacher for whom all of this is viscerally important'. In relation to poetry teachers' CPD, he affirmed that 'where we're very poor is providing teachers in the schools if they have that curiosity with a means of developing'. The examiner's emphasis on the significance of training opportunities for poetry teachers

was also echoed by two of the interviewed teachers, one of whom declared that she 'would find it hard to teach it' (TF) while the other maintained that 'you have to be a writer first' (TH).

Despite the fact that only 44% of surveyed students would like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of their MC English course (see 4.1.3), 13 of the interviewed students welcomed the idea, seeing it as a profitable activity in terms of its potential to help them better understand poetry and improve their writing skills. They were aware that 'in the English syllabus there is not enough creative writing and maybe there's more of the analysis aspect' (SB). They implied that even though they were different activities 'you can incorporate the two' (SI). One student explained the difference between the two by means of an analogy: 'you can analyse a painting and its details and understand what techniques he used and how he has used them to bring out an effect but it's not going to make you know how to paint…you have to try it' (SK). According to one student, poetry writing 'would help because you're applying everything you've learnt in crit and poetry…and you can see first hand how a poet applies emotions into their writing…so it would help even to write an essay and to analyse unseen poems because you'd understand first hand how the poet would write it' (SL). Another student maintained that 'even for students who aren't really into poetry it makes them appreciate…the actual thought process that it takes to write a poem' (SF). Poetry writing would give students an insight into 'what goes on in a poet's mind in terms of how to use language and structure a poem' and from that they 'would get an idea of how poetry is written and even how to read it better' (SO). Two students were afraid 'it would be a bit hard' (SD), however, they felt 'it would be fun' (SO). One student stated that 'maybe when you have not poets but teachers who are encouraging you it's better' (SD) while another two students thought that poetry writing was an activity that 'an examiner can't really assess' (SE) so it should be something they only did in class. In one of the focus groups similar views were expressed. One student claimed she 'wouldn't mind trying it but not be graded on it' (S2A). Poetry writing 'would be exciting and more interesting. We'd get to feel the same way the writers do and get to put our feelings into it' (S2B). This was 'because you can relate certain words. Like I used that word and the writer uses it too and we can relate the feeling and learn how he uses it' (S2B). Moreover, poetry writing would enable students to 'apply what you learn in class to understand what the writer is trying to do when you're reading a poem' (S2A). In this sense, 'it would

also help for the exam…because if you're doing it on your own and then you're given a text to analyse you can put yourself in the writer's shoes. You can understand why and how' (S2C).

One of the two students who disagreed with the idea of writing poetry in class asserted that it would not 'be fair because…the writing of poetry requires a separate talent and some people possess it and some people don't' (SA). According to the other student, poetry writing 'would make things even worse…I'm already not interested in studying poetry let alone writing my own' (SM). One of the focus groups helped to shed light on why some students might feel this way about poetry writing: 'I think the fact that we analyse it so much kind of…discourages us' (S1A). The interviewees implied that they did not always feel this way about poetry writing. They agreed with one of their peers when she said, 'I used to do it when I was in secondary but now I can't imagine myself doing it. It's harder' (S1B). Another student indicated that the problem lied in the fact that 'when we were younger we could write about anything but now it has to be in a certain way and it has to have figures of speech and deep meanings' (S1D).

4.3.8 Writing Song Lyrics

Only four students claimed to write song lyrics, with just one of them being someone who also writes poetry (SB). The other students said that they had either never written song lyrics or else had tried on a few occasions before giving up. Those who still wrote song lyrics indicated that 'it's sort of something fun for me' (SM); forming part of a band or playing an instrument helps motivate them. Just like poetry, song lyrics for these students seemed to be a creative means of self-expression: 'I like how you can write how you feel but in a limited way and with different meanings and metaphors and similes and stuff like that' (SG). One of the students who used to write poetry in the past explained, 'I used to write song lyrics but if I had to choose I'd rather write poetry…[it] might be more profound in a certain way' (SE). On the other hand, the case of SM shows that one might not like poetry writing but enjoy writing lyrics.

The major hurdle for those students who had never attempted to write song lyrics seemed to be the fact that they were not musicians: 'I think if you had to write lyrics first you have to have the music' (SD). According to one student, writing lyrics was 'a bit harder than just writing poetry because with songs they kind of need to

sound better…songs have to have music' (SH). If one lacked musical knowledge 'then the song lyrics will not actually come out that well' (SJ). As in the case of poetry writing, for one particular student, lyrics seemed to require some special innate ability which she considered herself to lack: 'I wish I could but I just don't have the talent' (SA).

4.3.9 Poetry as a Course Component

The poetry components seemed to be some of the most favourite aspects of the MC English course for both teachers and students. All the teachers mentioned that they preferred teaching literature and nearly all of them indicated that poetry was one of their most favourite subjects. According to one teacher, poets 'give you more amplitude' because 'you put them within a context so that the students can understand' (TA). Three of the teachers expressed the idea that they enjoyed teaching poetry 'because it is more demanding' (TC) on them and their students; doing poetry 'challenges the mind' (TF). These teachers acknowledged that sometimes students found poetry difficult but in their opinion knowing how to analyse poetry was 'a skill that they need for life' (TF). Poetry lessons were associated with a discovery process: 'it's more interesting to communicate what you have discovered and trying to urge the students to discover more in the poem' (TB). One teacher claimed that even though she enjoyed teaching poetry 'I wouldn't just like to do poetry…I need a break from poetry sometimes' (TH).

Nearly half the interviewed students mentioned poetry lessons as some of their most favourite lessons. One student remarked that 'I think I'm better at poetry and I enjoy it more' (SB) while another student said that she enjoyed 'poetry but when the poem is good' (SG). For another student, poems 'allow you to be artistic and allow your imaginative roots to develop' (SE). One of the students who claimed that Wilfred Owen lectures were her favourite also said that literary criticism was 'a bit hard…it's not one of my favourite subjects' (SD).

The two focus groups characterised their poetry lessons as consisting of the same series of events noted in the classroom observation sessions: 'first we read on our own…then the teacher reads it aloud and then we start analysing word by word' (S2A). Despite being asked questions about the poem by the teacher, one student pointed out that 'we learn the poem by what he tells us not by what we do' (S2B). There seemed to be agreement that in poetry lessons it was desirable if 'we could

participate more' (S1A). This was because 'we don't usually discuss… It's quite like parroting, you just copy what he says' (S2D). One student explained that her teacher's method could be described as 'useful but not enjoyable. There's a difference' (S2C). It was useful 'because we analyse the poem and find the important parts' (S2A) and due to the fact that 'you have all the notes that he dictates during the lecture so you just go through them' (S1D). However, it was not enjoyable because it was 'like going on Wikipedia looking up what the poem is about and that's it' (S2B).

Almost all the students mentioned the idea that poetry was a genre that they had to 'analyse' (SJ). Whilst five students enjoyed doing this because it was a transferable skill—'now it's come into my life like when I read a book I can't help but actually analyse it on my own…I actually look for the hidden meanings' (SJ)— the majority of them seemed to find it 'difficult' (SH). Three students mentioned that criticism of poetry in particular made them feel 'nervous' (SC). According to one interviewee, this happened because students were 'very picky with the message of the poem…if I get that wrong I'm afraid I'm going to get the whole thing wrong so I'm constantly focusing on the message…getting the meaning out of it…if I don't get it right I won't be able to continue' (SI). This student seemed to be scared of being unable to understand the poem and write about it unless he identified its meaning. Another student claimed that 'we focus a bit too much on analysing it…and sometimes I think that's a bit too much' (SA). The students' feelings seemed to be in contrast with the feelings of those teachers who enjoyed teaching poetry precisely because of its difficulty.

One third of the interviewed students stated that they 'enjoy figuring out what the poet is trying to say' (SF) because 'reading a poem is one thing but…understanding its deep meaning…and knowing this will actually get me good marks makes me quite happy doing it' (SI). For three students, the issue of understanding a poem was tied to choice of poems: 'sometimes I get bored because I don't like the poem but when I like it [and] understand it then I enjoy studying it' (SG). For those students who liked creative writing, studying poetry was enjoyable because by means of it they were able to 'appreciate the works of other people and the effort that they put into writing certain poems' (SL). Four students stated that they enjoyed reading and discussing poetry in class but not analysing it critically because 'sometimes it's taken a bit too far…it's a bit insane how deeply we go into it during our lessons' (SA). These students also mentioned that they did not like being

asked to 'do a whole critical essay on it…I don't really like that…I find it difficult to analyse a poem' (SN). Only one student affirmed that she did not enjoy studying poetry: 'I'd rather be studying something else, something I find interesting' (SM).

Talking about students' attitudes towards poetry, the examiner expressed his belief that they do 'enjoy it. One has to teach it well, of course, whatever that means and however we want to define that, but yes they enjoy it'. He explained that students enjoy poetry 'because, quite simply and if that condition of "good teaching" is in place, they "get" it'. He described how 'After they have a poem explained to them…there is a sense of appreciative understanding…and a sense, too, that there is something in the poem which may defeat and frustrate understanding, and which they tend to be intrigued by'. The examiner admitted that 'This may seem over-optimistic – but I am assuming in these questions that we are speaking about students who will have been discovered to have a receptivity to poetry anyway'.

According to the examiner, 'poetry has to be difficult. Poetry has to be oblique, hermetic, succinct, compressed, sharp and so on and so forth'. 'In a culture that places so much emphasis on supposed accessibility and transparency of expression', he considers it important to show students 'that there is also this choice…that there is also a value in obliquity'. If this fails to happen 'then I think we're letting them down'. Students need to value the fact that 'poetic language has some wonderful effects of compression…it's a counter culture. It's corrective to the idea that language should be algorithmic and open to instrumentality'. The examiner affirmed that 'poetry is the best means we have to show them that it can be like that but not always necessarily so. I think if we don't show them that then we are letting them down'.

4.3.10 Reasons for Studying Poetry

All the teachers claimed that poetry played an important part in the MC English course and most of them were of the opinion that 'it's enriching' (TA) in some way or other. Despite the fact that it could be termed 'not essential' (TB) or 'useless' (TC), poetry was still a necessary part of the syllabus because 'it develops a certain refinement in our appreciation of life' (TB). According to one teacher, poetry 'does make you wonder at being alive and I think our students need a kind of reconnection to the sheer unpredictability of being alive' (TC). Another teacher explained that there were also more tangible benefits to studying poetry: 'if I had to justify poetry's

place in the A-level I would say that in order for a language to be engaged with at a certain level it has to be understood also when it is being used creatively' (TD). A colleague of his agreed with this and said, 'we teach poetry to make students aware of the beauty of the language and also to make students aware of how language can be utilised' (TG). Moreover, poetry seemed to develop one's understanding in terms of 'allow[ing] the individual to see the world differently, to see the world from the point of view of others, to explore aspects of imagination which otherwise wouldn't be explored' (TD). Poetry allowed people to 'connect with certain parts in ourselves which might not come to the fore otherwise' (TG).

The students seemed to be divided between two main reasons for studying poetry. On the one hand, they mentioned the idea of studying poetry in order to enhance one's ability to analyse and understand different poems. For six students this enabled them 'to appreciate a poem' (SO) whereas for three others the most important purpose was that of helping them to pass an examination that assessed their knowledge of poetry and their ability to write about it, one student saying 'we're forced to in a way' (SM). On the other hand, studying poetry was also seen as a means of developing one's understanding of life and human emotions, with five students indicating that 'by studying poetry we are also studying life in a way' (SB). Poetry seemed to give students an 'insight on their own lives, it helps them understand certain things' (SJ) and this happened because 'poetry is something which is really insightful and really deep' (SE).

All the teachers concurred that students should continue studying poetry in this day and age because 'it's a form of enrichment' (TH). If the educational system had to prevent them from studying poetry, 'it would be robbing our students of a very important experience whether or not they follow it up in the future' (TE). All the teachers agreed with the idea that students got a lot out of studying poetry, 'both in terms of language and also in terms of discovering new things about themselves and the world around them' (TD). Poetry 'aids in critical thinking and analysing what people write, what people say' (TB). For one teacher, 'in an age of prose, with all that involves, keeping poetry alive or allowing poetry to keep us alive is a necessity' (TC). A colleague of his agreed and said that 'if you don't have poetry it's like living in a house without mirrors…poetry is essentially aimed at knowing yourself' (TA). For this teacher, poetry was 'a civilising process…and if we stop teaching poetry we are saying that we have stopped civilisation' (TA).

The majority of interviewed students felt that people should continue studying poetry because it formed part of humanity's cultural heritage. Two thirds of them mentioned the idea that poetry like other art forms possessed a kind of permanence: 'even though we think that we've advanced, some things remain the same and it's good to go back to that and see that something's stable' (SH). Given that 'it's a large piece of our culture' (SI), poetry should continue to be studied because if people were to stop doing so 'it's like losing a piece of art and replacing it by technology, which is not deep at all' (SL). For more than half the students, poetry needed to be studied because by means of it 'a lot of people can understand emotions…it makes you think about such things' (SC). Poetry allowed students to 'analyse things more, see things that other people can't see' (SD). According to one student, 'you'd be surprised by how much poetry can help someone' (SJ). One focus group student affirmed that poetry 'should still be on the syllabus because it's an important way of expressing yourself' (S1C). In the same focus group, the view was expressed that 'school helps to preserve poetry' (S1A). Building on the belief that poetry is almost exclusively an academic subject, one student mentioned that 'if we don't study it, it will be lost completely because…we don't go home and look up poems. So if we don't do it at school it won't be done anywhere' (S1B). However, not everyone agreed with these ideas: 'I don't think we should be obliged to study poetry…because it being something that we have to sit for pushes someone back' (SM). In fact, the other focus group indicated that poetry is studied 'because school forces us' (S2B). Two students in this group adopted a highly utilitarian perspective. One of them asked, 'most of us aren't going to become poets so…what good is it doing to us?' (S2A). Her peer stated, 'I don't think it's that important. It doesn't affect us in everyday life' (S2C).

According to the examiner, poetry has always formed part of the MC English syllabus 'because the syllabus panel never conceived removing it'. This was because 'the panel sensed and understood…that the encounter with poetry is the only witness we have to the enduring value of whatever it is that we might wish to take from what' it provides. Here he was referring to his earlier definition of poetry as something that paradoxically transcended the instrumental and yet was an embodiment of efficiency.

4.3.11 Choosing Poetry

When the students and teachers were asked who selected the poems they read during literary criticism seminars, they all declared that it was the teacher who was responsible for this. Half the teachers indicated that they had never asked students to choose any poems and another two claimed that they had either done it once or else that 'it hardly ever happens' (TH). Two other teachers mentioned that they did encourage students to bring poems to class but both of them affirmed that first they vetted the poems in terms of efficacy as teaching and exam-preparation resources. One of the teachers who had never asked students to choose poetry to read in class claimed that this 'would be a good idea, something which might work...I think they would be able to benefit from bringing their own poems' (TD). According to him, in teaching literary criticism 'there is a clash between trying to encourage students to love the subject while at the same time, being the component which students find hardest in the examination, work towards building their skills' (TD). For him and some other colleagues, the main challenge was the time needed to cover all that was expected by the syllabus.

Nine students declared that it was 'a good thing' (SK) that it was their teachers who chose the poems to be read in the seminars, a few of them indicating that the teacher 'knows best' (SJ). Nonetheless, 14 students suggested that they should have a say in the choice of poems, primarily because 'a lot more people would be interested in the lesson' (SA). Being asked to look for poems to read in class would, for one particular student, be an opportunity to 'find the kind of poetry that I enjoy most' (SB). For another student, it would serve as 'a chance to express your own taste' (SJ). The very act of 'bringing it in class…actually shows that it means something to them and they're appreciating it' (SF). Expressing the sentiments of most of her peers, one student explained that 'we would probably enjoy poetry more if we're given a chance of choosing poems' (SN). In one of the focus groups the students agreed that being invited to bring poems to class 'makes sense because if we're to find poems we like we might be more interested in poetry' (S1C). However, they were still convinced that the fact that the teacher was responsible for choosing poetry was 'a good idea because he knows more than us' (S1A).

4.3.12 Poetry Lessons

When teaching poetry almost all the interviewed teachers claimed to focus on a poem's use of language and its potential for personal enrichment. Five teachers seemed to believe that content and language were equally important and one teacher explained that 'what we do at A-level when it comes to poetry is mostly based on the New Critics, the idea that…form is content and content is form. So we never just focus on what the poem is about or how it is written but we try to bring them together' (TD).

The idea that poetry teaching had to target the 'personal' was mentioned by six teachers. One teacher affirmed that his aim for each poetry lesson was to ensure 'that they walk out of my lecture room feeling that they have been enriched'; in order for this to happen 'I always try to look at poems in a way that is strictly personal' (TA). Another teacher pointed out that 'poetry is communication between persons and I feel that we often ignore this personal element' (TC). For him and his colleagues, 'poetry is not the conveying of objective knowledge; it is subjective, it starts as subjective knowledge' (TC). Given that 'poetry is an intimate thing', the teachers sought to cultivate 'the connections between the poem and [students'] own life and the life around them' (TG). The emphasis on 'poetry's relevance to their own life' was considered important because 'if you don't identify with something and if you don't find any relevance to it then…it's useless I'm trying to tell you this is a beautiful thing, this is something you should be looking at' (TG).

For the majority of these teachers, 'a poem needs an emotional kind of attachment on the part of the reader' and if students were not willing 'to read with their feelings' then 'it's difficult to understand it…unless they feel it they won't get it' (TH). These teachers seemed to believe that 'poetry is in the experience and not necessarily in the meaning' (TD) and that it acted as 'a two way commitment…a personal kind of conversation' (TC) that 'requires an emotional response' (TA). One teacher explained that 'the poem has a body and a soul, it has a spirit, something that you cannot remove' and in order for students to understand it 'the first thing to do is to see the poem as a whole from a distance and try to ask themselves what it's about and then see how this spirit is created' (TB). Given that 'poetry is elusive and forces you to go beneath the surface…students need to use their intuition to fully experience it otherwise it would just be damn difficult' (TA). In the interview, TA repeated one

of his instructions to students in the observed lesson: 'don't think but feel…first allow it to work on your heart and then use your head' (TA).

A poem's use of language was considered to be equally significant, with all of the teachers echoing the idea that 'poetry is a special use of words, it's a unique use of words' (TC). One teacher explained that 'poetry is playful and careful attention to its language could give them so much…without this attention to language we would be short changing students in a way' (TA). Six of these teachers mentioned that they 'start by making [students] aware of the power of words' because 'if they do not develop an affinity to words it is useless' (TG).

4.3.13 Lesson Gains

Both the students and the teachers felt that poetry lessons could be enriching and they both seemed to think that analysing poetry and appreciating poetry were closely linked to one another. As one teacher put it, 'in poetry you get to the meanings or to the ambiguities, the richness or meanings through words and this is the primary objective in appreciating poetry' (TC).

Six teachers seemed to believe that 'poetry requires a more intense kind of reading because it's not just what the poet is trying to say but how it's being said' (TD) and this led them to cultivate students' 'ability to dissect, to dig deeper' (TE). For one teacher, 'one very effective way…of teaching poetry is to actually consider the poem as a layered medium', especially since 'the raison d'être of poetry is connotation' (TE). According to a colleague of his, 'poetry requires analysis, you need to break it down and analyse what the words mean' (TF). She explained that this 'takes time, years actually. This is difficult for students to develop. Their essays are sometimes very simple; they find it hard to engage in analysis' (TF).

When asked about what first came to mind when they thought of the term 'poetry lesson', almost all the students mentioned the idea of analysing a poem. This involved 'reading a poem and learning what the meaning is' (SB) then 'explaining it in your own words and what you think the poet is trying to say in the poem' (SG). The activity was usually initiated by 'the teacher giving us a poem' (SK) and sometimes analysis was 'difficult, not easy at all' (SI). Only one student said that for her 'poetry lesson' evoked the idea of 'experiencing a poem and enjoying it' (SO) and at the other extreme only one student said that 'it's boring' (SM).

The majority of the students felt that the most important things they were gaining from their poetry lessons were the skills 'to analyse it deeper' (SA) and the ability to 'appreciate poetry a lot more' (SB). The fact that eight students combined these two aspects seemed to suggest that they felt they were gaining something that, in the words of one teacher as reported by a student, 'will last you for a lifetime' (SE). According to the same student, 'what I'm gaining is beautiful because…it's something which goes beyond the exam, something which helps me in my own life' (SE). Despite the fact that quite a number of students used the word 'appreciate', only one student specifically said that her poetry lessons 'probably made me enjoy poetry more' (SF).

Three students mentioned the idea that their lessons had encouraged them to write their own poetry: 'when I read a poem I'm inspired to sometimes write my own' (SG). In the case of these students, studying poetry had enabled them to 'learn some tips from other poets about how they write it' (SL). However, only one of these three students (SK) admitted that his lessons had encouraged him to read more poetry for pleasure too. For another four students, one of the most important things they were gaining was 'guidance in writing essays [or] the chance to actually learn how we should do things before we go for our exams' (SJ). While admitting that she got 'a lot of help' with essay writing in her tutorials, one particular student mentioned that she was gaining 'nothing much' from her lessons 'because I'm still as confused about poetry now as when I came here' (SH).

4.3.14 Poetry as a Mystery

More than half the teachers complained that students 'are preconditioned to look at poetry as having a buried meaning and that during crit we are meant to bring that out' (TG). One teacher clarified this by saying that 'a lot of students…believe that the key to a good critical appreciation is discovering what lies beneath the words. So they look at the poem as if they have to decipher a hidden code which will tell them what the poem is about' (TD). These teachers affirmed that they 'discourage' (TG) students from adopting such a stance, insisting that 'all they have to do is read it carefully' (TF). They told students that 'meaning can't exist without the poem's handling of language' (TA), that 'the language of the poem cannot be forgotten in trying to find some kind of hidden treasure' (TD). Three of these teachers tried to

make students aware of the 'notion of poetry resisting meaning' but 'sometimes they fail to see that; they think it's all a mystery' (TA).

Nevertheless, in the observed lessons, half the teachers did give a lot of importance to the poem's content and they did ask students to think about the poem's meaning. These teachers' actions were perhaps motivated by the fact that 'whatever we might think of poetry we are ultimately preparing them for an important exam' (TB).

4.3.15 Torturing Poetry

Towards the end of the interview, the interviewees were asked to discuss Billy Collins's 'An Introduction to Poetry' with respect to their personal experience of poetry lessons. In the case of the students they were also shown a video adaptation of the poem. Many of the interviewed teachers and students identified with the situation presented in this stimulus material.

Just over half the teachers conceded that Collins's poem described their experience during a poetry lesson, especially in the way it 'brings in the distinction of the pleasure of poetry as compared to the torture' (TF). Four teachers declared that despite their efforts to 'make them appreciate poetry…you find students who try to do it mechanically' (TB). One teacher claimed that 'you want them to get curious and they just want to get the answer…their failure is in curiosity' (TA). He said that students ended up 'torturing me to tell them. They want the answer; they think I have all the answers' (TA).

The majority of the students felt that Collins's poem 'is quite similar to what happens during the lessons' (SB), with thirteen students agreeing with the idea that 'here it's telling you to appreciate a poem for what it really is but usually we just try to find a meaning' (SK). Students mentioned that during poetry lessons 'the emphasis isn't on feeling' (SA) but on 'forcing an interpretation out of yourself' (SD). They indicated that 'during the lessons we focus more on improving our grades than enjoying a poem' (SH). Half the students used the same metaphors used by teachers in order to describe this process: 'as students we have the tendency to constantly dig into the poem' (SJ). One student defended this attitude by saying, 'since the teacher already knows the meaning…I don't think they realise how hard it is for students to understand what the words are trying to say…if you've never seen it before you can't really decipher what it's about' (SC).

Corroborating the views presented above, the students in both focus groups confirmed that Collins's poem resonated with their experience of poetry lessons. The act of torturing poetry for meaning seemed unavoidable to them: 'I think you can't help trying to find out the secret meaning behind it… You try to find something hidden behind the lines that might not actually be there' (S1A). One student recounted how 'we had a test last week and I tried to find a meaning that didn't exist but I was so deep into it that you automatically do it' (S1B). Her peer admitted that 'we do analyse everything in the poem but then it's like sometimes even without knowing you start seeing too much in it' (S1D). The students seemed aware of the fact that 'we do have this idea that every poem has a hidden meaning' (S2B) and that this led them to approach poetry in ways that dampened the experience of reading it: 'you remove the meaning of the poem by analysing it too much' (S2A). According to the same student who expressed the latter idea, 'for us every poem has to be analysed but the poet writes it for the reader to get the feel and enjoy it not to get the meaning out of it only' (S2A).

Despite the fact that half the teachers blamed students for the practice of analysing poetry for meaning, they also admitted that what was partly responsible for students' attitude towards poetry was 'the way they are taught' (TD). According to one interviewee, some teachers 'have this kind of fetish of showing or inculcating into their students the idea that a poem contains a message or a moral' (TC). Students tortured poetry 'because basically that's what we are driving our students to do, to find the meaning for a poem' (TG). This happened because 'the way the exam is at the moment is not allowing for an appreciation of the use of language' (TG). Since students 'want to pass an exam…they think that there is a certain way of doing things' (TH). One interviewee implied that teachers might also be to blame for this by saying that 'unfortunately we're too exam oriented' (TF). She explained that 'the dissection of a poem in class' could lead students to 'think that I'm dissecting it too much' despite any efforts 'to make it not look like I'm analysing it too much, that I am enjoying it' (TF). She went on to say that 'I'd love them to think of me as a person who is making them enjoy poetry. Even though I don't read poetry, I love it' (TF). For another teacher, it had to do with the fact that 'our students are not being given the chance to express themselves' (TA). A colleague of his agreed with this idea and pointed out that 'most of them are afraid of making a mistake because

education has drummed into them that when you speak out in class you have to be right and the teacher has to applaud you' (TG).

In contemplating their own teachers' practices, the interviewed students were not in agreement about whether teachers resembled the speaker in Collins's poem or whether they were somewhat responsible for the students' attitude towards poetry. Nine students revealed that teachers were somewhat responsible for their perception of poems as texts to be analysed for meaning. These students indicated 'that sometimes they do instil this into us' (SJ) and that teachers 'analyse it in the same way we do; we imitate them in a way' (SN). One student explained that 'there are unfortunately many teachers who make poems look like a mathematical equation, like there's no other way, as if there are only two methods how to work it and that's how you have to do it' (SE). Another student agreed with this idea and according to her, 'teachers usually go for the meaning so that we can understand what it's all about', but the risk was that 'when [the teacher] goes about it in a way in which I can't really appreciate it, the poem loses its beauty' (SL). Some other students held themselves accountable and claimed that 'they tell us never to over analyse and torture it but sometimes you do end up doing that especially if it's a poem you don't like' (SD). For one particular student, 'those teachers who are passionate about poetry…do get it through a bit but then they still focus obviously on the educational way in which we're meant to do it' (SH). This meant being encouraged by teachers 'to identify all the things that we would need for the crit essay', especially since 'it's more the technical details that they focus on' (SI).

The majority of students indicated that the practice of torturing poetry was mostly motivated by their awareness of the impending examination and of what they were expected to do when writing an essay on poetry. One student confessed that 'with poetry we don't enjoy it; we just think about the exam' (SC). Another student concurred by saying that 'if there are people who don't like poetry they're going to be constantly reading it in bits and trying to find a meaning in it and they mess up their whole understanding of the poem' (SL). They did this in the hope 'that if they really attack what's written then they'd get better marks' (SA) and so as a student 'you're going to do everything you can to actually understand it and take it apart piece by piece' (SC). Students tackled poetry in this way because they 'probably worry about what they'll do in the exam' (SG) and sometimes they even 'panic because in the exam you only have one hour to write an essay about a poem' (SF).

For nearly half the students, 'poetry is sometimes difficult to understand and unless you do that you won't get it' (SN). One student explained that 'without the meaning we feel lost, with the meaning we feel secure; without it, it would almost be impossible to write an essay' (SI). This led a number of students to believe that in 'every sentence in the poem you have to find a meaning behind it so you can build a 500 word essay, to just fill it up sort of' (SM). The following comparison probably best describes what some students felt about the effect of such an attitude towards poetry: 'it's like a prisoner of war and they try to take every piece of information out of it to understand it and ultimately they just end up killing it' (SJ). Nonetheless, given their beliefs in relation to what is expected of them in the examination, almost all the students seemed to concur with this view of things:

> I see the viewpoint of Billy Collins as being accurate but I also think that what the lecturer actually does is more beneficial to the students as far as lectures go for the purposes of the exam; it's more useful. Appreciating it in the way that the poet here does is also correct, it's very good obviously, but I think that's more for personal gain rather than for the exam. (SB)

In one of the focus groups, the students reminisced about how their poetry teachers in secondary school 'used to make poetry fun' (S1C). One student mentioned that she 'had a teacher who always asked us to think about how to relate the poem to our lives. We used to really have fun' (S1D). However, at Junior College this did not seem possible given that 'here it's a constant rush… we just cover the syllabus and that's more important than anything else' (S1A). According to one student, 'if you just make students have fun without covering the syllabus that wouldn't be good. So it's unavoidable that in poetry lessons we analyse poems rather than try to enjoy poetry' (S1C). Both focus groups agreed that the reason for which they tortured poetry was mostly due to the pressures of the examination: 'we don't have the time to enjoy it. We are focused on the exam so we try to get the meaning as soon as possible' (S2B). The students seemed to believe that 'in the exam, that's what they want from us: the ability to read a poem and try to analyse it in a specific way. That's the difference between a fail and a pass' (S2C). They suggested that 'it's all we focus on. Sometimes I feel I come to school just to pass my exams and we don't have the time…to enjoy things' (S2D). The students were aware that the enjoyment of poetry was 'what [Collins's] poem is encouraging us to do' (S2D) and

that this enjoyment was crucial given that without it 'we find poetry boring and hard…because when you don't enjoy something you don't grasp the whole idea' (S2C).

Despite having combined the two concepts earlier in the interview, the students showed an awareness that there might be a difference between analysing and appreciating poetry after reading the poem and watching the video adaptation. They maintained that 'poems are there to be appreciated' (SC) and that 'it's good to just read it and appreciate it for what it is' (SO). All the students implied that 'when you try to analyse it you wash away the poem…the real beauty of the poem is lost when you go about it the wrong way' (SL). According to one particular student, 'you actually learn more from appreciating it than you do from analysing it too critically' and what this means is that one has to 'relate to it' (SA). For another student, 'looking at it from a more creative perspective is a better experience' (SF) and this seemed to imply that students should be open to the idea that a poem had multiple meanings: 'that's the beauty of life, that we can't understand everything… and I think that's why poetry is so beautiful, why it makes people so happy' (SE).

The examiner considered Collins's poem to be 'a twee expression of what it is that makes poetry unnerving, and consequently and by a cruel irony it's taming and denatures the very "force"…in poetry that it wants to honour'. His 'misgivings about the poem' were driven by the suspicion that it 'is equivalent to texts that are extremely good teaching texts at a certain level but then they appear to take on a kind of allegorical parabolic truth about literature pedagogy that we'd start to think in the terms that those texts impose'. At the same time, he admitted that 'this is the kind of poem that would work very well with the post-secondary age groups because I think it shows them the limitations perhaps of a particular response to poetry'. In his opinion, 'the most ethical criticism is the form of criticism that finds a means and a way of responding individually to every individual poem'. In relation to the torture of poetry for examination purposes, the examiner conceded that assessment does influence teachers' classroom practices and students' engagement with poetry: 'I think that it shapes it and that it constricts it to an appreciable extent'. However, he also pointed out that 'the encounter exists in the first place because of – and through – awareness of that assessment'. He claimed that 'this probably doesn't "kill" the encounter with poetry for those students who were always going to have a meaningful relation with poetic language. Indeed, it might also goad it'. While

valuing 'an emotive and intuitive, untutored and unrehearsed response from students', the examination provides a way of 'framing' the encounter. If it did not exist 'it's probably going to bring back all the impressionistic responses to poetry that [T. S.] Eliot in the early part of the twentieth century was worried about'. According to the examiner, 'the idea that poetry is there to be enjoyed makes us think of another way of looking at poetry, that it demands a rigour of response, that it demands a discipline of response'. He claimed that 'the enjoyment…is never going to be entirely an unrehearsed enjoyment'.

4.3.16 Students' Personal Response

According to six teachers, personal response in an essay on poetry should be encouraged because a poem was 'a personal happening for the poet and for his reader and it's ridiculous to put aside this kind of personal take on a text' (TC). If it were not encouraged then the teacher was 'just teaching them to pass an examination, to conform to ideas' (TA). One particular teacher explained that he 'always tell[s] them there is not one truth'; he encouraged them to come up with their own interpretation as long as it 'is within the context of the poem' (TG). For another teacher, an essay was always 'based on a personal response' but while 'initially the response has to be subjective' the student was then encouraged to 'move towards objectivity' (TH). In fact, three teachers felt that 'there has to be a personal response but not entirely subjective…this element of subjectivity has to be very very delicate' (TB). They claimed that while 'every essay is a response to the poem', students had to keep in mind that in an essay the 'major subject is the poem itself rather than other things which the poem might make me think of' (TD). Two teachers in particular were very wary of personal response. While one of them discouraged it altogether because 'you often end up with something stale or stupid ideas' (TF), the other one restricted it to the conclusion by telling students 'you are a reader and you have to in a way objectify yourself and step back and try to think of the effect of this poem on any potential reader' (TE).

All the students seemed to be aware of the need to avoid any subjectivity in their essays on poetry and there was a fear that analysing their thoughts and feelings about a poem could be 'dangerous' (SA) or 'risky' (SN). They acted in a 'cautious' way because they were 'afraid that the examiner won't agree or something like that' (SF). One particular student maintained that 'it shouldn't be like that because if

you're writing your own opinion it should be valued but examiners might judge you because they don't agree with your opinion' (SN).

In both focus groups, students confirmed that personal response in essays about poetry was best avoided. One student mentioned that while she used to include her personal response at secondary school, she 'stopped' doing so once she enrolled at Junior College: 'I think a teacher told me off once because of it… Like it's not about you; it's about the poem and what the poet wanted to say' (S1B). This was driven by the belief that 'the whole point of the essay is to explain what the poet wants to say, his feelings not your feelings' (S1B). Similarly, her peers mentioned that they had 'always been told that the essay is about what the poet wanted to say' (S1C) and that 'you're not part of the poem' (S1D). These students seemed convinced that 'the essay isn't about what you think but about what the poet thinks… It's not about your personal opinion, it's about doing the analysis' (S2A). This concern with analysis meant that even if the students wanted to include their personal response in an essay, 'we don't have the time to assess what we think about the poem' (S2B). As one student put it, 'the problem is that there's so much meaning in one poem that there's no time' (S2C). Her peer suggested that 'we analyse a poem too much to actually be able to say what we feel about it… We're so focussed on trying to explain the structure, diction, etcetera that we don't have time to give our own opinion' (S2D).

Besides being wary of the examiner's presumed expectations, students also kept in mind their teachers' instructions about writing essays on poetry: 'they tell us that you have to remain objective and that the essay is not actually about your opinion but about what the poet is saying' (SL). One student recounted an episode in which he once 'got quite a big shouting at from a teacher because what I spoke about in the essay was not how other people talk about the poem' (SI). This view was echoed by another student who claimed that 'giving my opinion in an essay is not right…it's not the place in which I have to give my own opinion, it's where I need to analyse the opinion of someone else' (SE). Ten students confirmed that their teachers told them to restrict their personal response to the conclusion: 'they tell us to include it in the conclusion so as not to throw the whole thing off' (SJ). As a result, a number of students thought that 'it's better not to mention your views and leave the essay as it is…your point is out of the point sort of' (SO). However, despite being aware that they needed to be 'careful' (SH) with regards to personal response, seven students

still 'feel it is important' because 'it lets you think not just what others think, to let yourself think about the poem and not just what they tell you' (SK). As one student put it, 'what's the point of writing an essay if you don't show what you think about it…we're not encouraged to do that however' (SO).

According to the examiner, when students write about poetry they are 'very hesitant. They look for structure. Their responses are rehearsed perhaps in terms of what we expect them to say'. For this reason, students' personal response 'should be given quite a lot of importance'. He maintained that teaching should be 'sensitive and helpful in directing students in how to best write an essay that can communicate that personal response to poetry'. At the same time, marking of students' work should be 'sensitive enough to be discerning about it where it occurs – and to not mark down other students who don't give a "personal" response'.

4.3.17 Critical Lenses

Given the importance of literary theory in providing young people with a range of critical lenses through which to interpret texts (Appleman, 2015; Atherton, Green, & Snapper, 2015; Gillespie, 2010; Tyson, 2015; Xerri, 2013b), the teachers and examiner in this study were asked a number of questions about the place of literary theory in the poetry classroom. The interviewed teachers seemed to share similar views about whether literary theory—understood as consisting of structuralism and subsequent theories—had a place within the A-level poetry lesson. Three of them considered it to be premature to introduce students to literary theory because they 'don't think that students are ready for it' (TH). This was in line with one of the findings of Tew and Addis's (2007) study, which highlighted teachers' 'concern about its appropriateness in terms of the level of the students' (p. 323). One particular teacher claimed that students are 'not prepared for it and personally I don't think it's important', neither at this level nor 'even in the future' (TB). He felt that by disagreeing with the idea of exposing students to literary theory he was being 'old fashioned' and also admitted a bit of insecurity in relation to the subject because when faced with the works of literary theorists 'many of them to me don't make sense personally' (TB). In his opinion what matters most for students was 'what the poet says and their interpretation of it' and he encouraged them to be aware that 'they're walking a very thin line between objectivity and subjectivity' (TB) in their response to poetry. A colleague of his thought that literary theory did not have a

place in the A-level poetry lesson because things were already quite 'difficult' (TE) for students. He claimed to 'sympathise with the literary devices approach to literary crit' and he would rather not 'complicate matters further' because 'students find that already engaging enough and sometimes they find it pretty difficult as well' (TE).

Another three teachers expressed themselves quite cautiously about whether literary theory should feature in A-level poetry lessons. In their opinion it should only do so at a 'basic' (TF) level. According to one teacher, students should be exposed to it only 'to a very limited extent…literary theory should have a very limited scope in the teaching of poetry' (TC). Just like those colleagues who disagreed with the use of literary theory in poetry lessons, this teacher felt that students were not 'cognitively and intellectually ready for it' (TC). This was because 'it involves a level of abstraction which our students at sixteen, for most of them anyway, find inaccessible' (TC). Moreover, he believed that literary theory was 'not exactly an easy subject and I wouldn't want that to spoil their approach by disheartening them, by discouraging them from enjoying poetry' (TC). A colleague of his agreed with these ideas and claimed that 'what you need at this level are the foundations…a basic grounding in practical criticism is sufficient' (TD). This was not only because students were still unready for literary theory but 'also because a lot of lecturers here have been educated at a time where literary theory wasn't even taught at university…they did a course which was based on New Criticism and things like that' (TD). In his opinion, literary theory had some value in that 'it does change and determine the way you look at things', however, it should not be 'a necessary requirement for a lecturer' (TD). He indicated that teachers could do well without it: 'no, I don't think you need literary theory' (TD).

Only two teachers felt that literary theory deserved to form part of their poetry lessons, however, both of them expressed reservations about the extent to which it should do so. One of them claimed that 'students should be made aware of' it because poets themselves might have been 'influenced' by literary theory and 'some of them do exploit' (TG) it. However, despite the fact that a 'certain basic knowledge of these theories is important', a teacher should not 'go into the depth that you're going to expect at university level' (TG). His colleague considered literary theory to be 'essential' but revealed concern about 'the philosophical aspect of it' given the fact that it 'gets very very profound' (TA). This, in his opinion, was part of the 'problem… with literary theory' (TA). It concerned the fear mentioned by some

of the other teachers, the idea that because of literary theory a teacher may 'discourage' (TA) students from engaging with poetry. This could happen either because it made poetry seem overly difficult or else because a teacher might 'make the theory more interesting than the poem itself' (TA). To describe the other facet of the 'problem' with literary theory, he used the analogy of dissecting a butterfly:

> It's exactly what happens when dissecting butterflies. You take a butterfly and you kill it and you cut it into bits and you might learn how a butterfly flies, but that butterfly will never fly again. If you do it well, if you do it really well then you do the dissection, you show them how the butterfly flies and that butterfly will fly in many minds. But you have to be a really good dissector. (TA)

This analogy seems to echo Montessori's (1917/1971) recounting of an episode in which after teaching children to dissect flowers they took an interest in the dissected parts and learnt to draw them without assistance. For TA, literary theory entailed a process of analysing a poem in order to explain how it worked. He seemed to share Appleman's (2015) idea that by means of literary theory students could be taught 'to decipher the world inscribed within the texts we study as well as learn to read the world around them' (p. 11). However, his fear was that if the teacher was not sufficiently skilled in the judicious use of literary theory there was the risk of ruining the poem and failing to inspire students to enjoy the poetry reading experience.

Just like some of the interviewed teachers, the examiner also expressed himself cautiously in relation to whether literary theory should form part of a teacher's approach to poetry at post-secondary level. He claimed that the reference to literary theory in the syllabus was 'put there to dispel misapprehensions which were floating around at the time', mainly the mistaken belief that candidates would score more highly if they were to refer to literary theory in their examination essays. He explained that 'clearly, one does not need to be quoting Eliot or Richards or Ricks or Kermode or Steiner or Jameson or Derrida or Lyotard or Ranciére or Badiou to get an A grade'. However, despite saying this, he complicated matters further by indicating that there existed the possibility of students being awarded more marks if they did quote literary theorists in their essays on poetry: 'If someone wants to mention them and to do so pertinently, then of course the marking will determine whether that deserves "brownie" points or not'. From a 'personal' stance, he expressed the 'hope that teachers will always be aware of what diverse areas of

literary criticism can contribute in teaching "to" the syllabus, and that they can be discerning in deciding how to "release" that knowledge in different classroom situations'. To substantiate this idea, the examiner recounted an anecdote in which he explained that the teacher who used to teach him literature in secondary school 'referred us regularly to Coleridge on *Macbeth*. Coleridge's criticism, as we know, is as theoretical as anything that came later. That didn't harm anybody, and it helped quite a few of us'. Coincidentally, the teacher he was referring to was TA, with whom he seemed to share an appreciation of a skillful and informed pedagogy that adeptly used literary theory in order to enhance the teaching of poetry.

For the examiner, teachers of poetry at post-secondary level should not only 'have a good idea of the canon of English poetry' but they should also be 'looking at some of the most fundamental works of criticism of the twentieth century on poetry'. In his opinion, if, as a teacher, 'you don't have that curiosity then I can't see how you can bring a certain *je ne sais quoi* to the classroom'. The examiner considered it 'worrying' that teacher education and development programmes seemed to be 'very poor' when it came to developing that curiosity.

The interviews with teachers, students and the chief examiner allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of their attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry and the study of poetry.

4.4 Conclusion

The above sections present the main findings that emerged from this study's data gathering process organised in terms of the instruments used. The patterns in attitudes, beliefs and practices that cut across these different sets of findings are discussed in further detail and with reference to the reviewed literature in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

This chapter consists of an in-depth discussion of the patterns that cut across the different sets of findings presented in the previous chapter. Those findings were organized in terms of the data collection instruments used in the study. In this chapter the main findings that emerged from the analysis of the data supplied by each instrument are linked thematically and discussed in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. This chapter is organized in terms of the main issues highlighted by the study.

5.1 Conceptions of Poetry

This study gives weight to the argument that the way teachers and students think about poetry affects their approach to it in the classroom and their everyday lives. Their attitudes and beliefs in relation to poetry influence how much poetry they read, as well as why and how they read and study it.

The teachers and students seemed to share similar conceptions of poetry. Both the survey and interviews showed that for most students poetry was a 'form of expression' intrinsically bound to the poet's thoughts and emotions and meant to evoke an emotive response in the reader (see 4.1.1; 4.3.1). This seemingly echoed Romantic notions of poetry, such as Wordsworth's (1802) idea that 'Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility' (p. l). It was also in line with Frost's (as cited in Bowen, 1921) idea that a poem has 'most important of all to reach the heart of the reader' (p. 1). For a number of participants, poetry was a creative use of language crafted by someone possessing the talent to do so. The link between poetry and emotions led some students to perceive poetry as being a very personal artistic medium that was not always easy for the reader to understand. Similarly, the teachers' own difficulty to define poetry was motivated by their understanding of poetry as something that eluded conceptualization (see 4.3.1). In this they seemed to agree with the chief examiner's idea that the attempt to define poetry was defied by its 'opaque' quality. At the same time, they deemed poetry to be an inspired use of language that facilitated the expression of something deeply buried and which granted the reader access to emotional and cognitive insights. In this they seemed to believe in Shelley's (1840) idea that 'Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration' (p. 62)

or else in Stevens's (1957) notion that 'Poets are the priests of the invisible' (p. 169). In the absence of religion, Shelley, as a Romantic poet, and Stevens, as a Modernist, both seem to be suggesting a similar role for poets. The teachers and students shared the belief that poetry was an important genre that needed to be studied at school (see 4.1.3; 4.3.10). This was mostly related to its capacity for personal growth and the development of 'insights' on life and the self. In this they seemed convinced of 'the effect that poetry can have on our perceptions, that is, on the way we see the world' (Jollimore, 2009, p. 132). Jollimore (2009) admits that this 'is one of the most powerful ways in which reading poetry can alter or even transform a person, and if poetry matters, I suspect, it matters largely because of its ability to accomplish this' (p. 132). Moreover, just like the examiner, the teachers and students expressed the belief that the study of poetry provided access to some kind of durable set of values that transcended transitory and frivolous concerns. Both teachers and students seemed to consider the poet to be in a privileged position and the reader's task to be that of gleaning the wisdom within poetry. The fact that most teachers and students were opposed to poetry writing in class (see 4.1.3; 4.3.7), seemed to confirm that for them poetic expression was the preserve of a privileged few due to the belief that 'a poet is born not made' and that poetry was a product of talent and inspiration not training. This implied that the only poetry activity worthy of a classroom context was the analytical search for whatever truths the poet had hidden in the text. Dymoke (2009) suggests that such conceptions of poetry have helped to underscore its supremacy over other genres and, in the process, damage teachers' and students' relationship with it. The participants' mystification of poetry stopped it from being seen as something accessible and enjoyable.

The perceived difficulty of poetry led to opposite attitudes on the part of teachers and students. One of the reasons for which the teachers enjoyed teaching poetry was its challenging nature (see 4.3.9), this also being the reason for which they claimed not to read it for pleasure. Nemerov (1972) affirms that 'There is a sort of reader who finds everything difficult if it happens to be written in verse… Such readers really have a very simple problem: they don't like poetry, even though some of them feel they ought to' (p. 24). The fact that students found poetry difficult made the teachers prize the analytical skills developed via literary criticism seminars, skills seemingly employed to discover meaning in a poem. In fact, during half of the observed lessons teachers were noted encouraging students to look for a specific

meaning in the text by means of an analytical approach (see 4.2.2). They seemingly disregarded the idea that 'the *poetic*…internalizes its dichotomies in advance, so that to speak of "poetic language" is at once to stipulate a general condition of the signifiable, while at the same time evoking a fundamental aporia, paradox, or pleonasm' (Armand, 2012). Aligning his views with I. A. Richards's (1926) notion of poetry of value, the examiner felt that it was the teacher's duty to emphasise poetry's difficulty, especially since students who were receptive to poetry were bound to enjoy the process of analysing a poem that eluded their efforts to understand it (see 4.3.9). In this, the examiner expressed an affinity with the poet Srikanth Reddy's (2010) admission that 'As a teacher of poetry, I try to encourage my students to cultivate a fascination with what's difficult about this art… I tell them, poetry isn't for wimps' (pp. 7-8). However, Reddy (2010) also admits that 'the difficulty inherent to poetic expression is what makes this form of writing so marginal in our culture today' (p. 8). In fact, the analytical demands associated with the poetry read in literary criticism seminars dampened most of the interviewed students' enjoyment. The element of difficulty within poetry led the survey respondents to rank the literary criticism component of poetry as being the most difficult one out of the nine components they did at school (see 4.1.1). This component was also the one they enjoyed the least. On the other hand, the set poetry text (Wilfred Owen's war poems) was a component that they relatively enjoyed and found easy. One explanation for this apparent contradiction is that for the purposes of literary criticism students were expected to master the skills of reading and writing about poetry on their own whereas for the set text they were mostly expected to reproduce the knowledge provided to them by their teacher. Students' apparent apprehension with respect to literary criticism was due to the fact that in the exam they were going to be presented with an unseen poem that they needed to understand and write about in one hour. Not having a teacher to unravel the poem for them made them perceive the task as inordinately challenging.

Literary criticism made students think of poetry as a difficult genre consisting of a hidden meaning that they needed to uncover through analysis. Peskin (2007) found that when students 'read words in the shape of a poem it triggered the expectations and conventions that theorists hypothesize are associated with the poetic genre, as well as an aesthetic appreciation of how literary elements and stylistic devices amplify meaning' (p. 34). For the students in the present study, meaning

seemed to be the main characteristic of poetry and it shaped their approach to it. In fact, those students who perceived some song lyrics as being comparable to poetry emphasized the significance of 'deep meaning' in rendering the lyrics poetic (see 4.3.4). Those students who did not consider lyrics to be a form of poetry insisted that this was because the latter had a 'deeper meaning' than the former. This was also mentioned in relation to the difference between writing lyrics and poetry (see 4.3.8). In the same vein, students' preference for reading poetry rather than listening to it was driven by the notion that it was only by reading and analyzing a poem that one could understand its 'true meaning' (see 4.3.5). Similarly, their teachers' preference for reading a poem rather than listening to it was because of their belief that poetry required intense concentration (see 4.3.2). Students thought of poetry's hidden meaning as some kind of message intentionally buried in the poem by its creator. Very few of them felt comfortable enough engaging in such analysis on their own, especially since they seemed convinced that their reading of the poem was never going to adequately expose its meaning. They seemed to conceive of poetry as made up of riddles to be solved (Dymoke, 2003). The prominence given to poetry's meaning seemed to almost eclipse anything else associated with poetry. The teachers seemed to be aware of this dilemma and claimed they discouraged students from adopting such a stance in relation to poetry, however, the observed lessons demonstrated that the opposite tended to happen in literary criticism seminars based on poetry (see 4.3.14). In a sense these seminars were restrictive by not enabling students to do what Lamarque (2009a) considers the mark of a poetically sensitive reader: 'To read poetry (of any kind) *as poetry* is to adopt a certain attitude of mind, a receptiveness, among other things, to finegrained expression, the salience of perspective, and the play of images' (pp. 51-52). The almost exclusive attention given to poetry's meaning encouraged a reductive view of the genre.

The participants' conceptions of poetry proved somewhat detrimental to teachers' and students' engagement with it as a genre that, according to the literature on poetry education, should primarily be read for personal pleasure (see 2.4).

5.2 Engaging with Poetry Outside the Classroom

This study underscores the idea that teachers' and students' level of engagement with poetry outside the classroom is important because this affects their attitudes and beliefs in relation to poetry as well as the way they approach it in class. If poetry fails

to feature amongst teachers' and students' extra-curricular activities, it is bound to be solely associated with the classroom context and hence engaged with for study purposes rather than for pleasure.

The majority of the teachers and students in this study claimed not to read poetry for pleasure (see 4.1.1; 4.3.2). Poetry was one of the least read materials in English amongst both sets of participants. The teachers affirmed that when they wanted to read something for pleasure they avoided poetry because of the 'intense' reading it entailed. The students explained that poetry was something to study not read for pleasure. Both sets of participants seemed to link the reading of poetry with the educational context. For the teachers the reading of poetry was restricted to their teaching duties while for the students this activity was an inherent part of their studies. Both teachers and students indicated that poetry seemed to demand an analytical reading and hence it was not something one did for pleasure. In fact, the majority of students confirmed that upon completing their studies at Junior College they would not read poetry (see 4.1.3). Their lessons had not impelled them to read poetry for pleasure, partly because of the strictly analytical approach adopted in these lessons (see 4.3.2). This was in tune with Lambirth's (2007) idea that if young people come to associate poetry solely with analysis they would have no motivation to read it for pleasure outside the classroom. The examiner complained about the lack of breadth in students' reading of poetry. Their knowledge of poetry was limited to what they had read at school. In fact, students were only able to mention the canonical poets they had studied at secondary and post-secondary levels (see 4.3.3). This narrow knowledge of poetry was also apparent amongst almost all the teachers, who mostly mentioned the canonical poets they had studied at university or taught at school. They seemed unaware of the importance of positioning themselves as role models in order to guide students while forming a reading community together with them (Day & Bamford, 1998). Cremin (2010) shows that when teachers position themselves as readers of poetry they stand a better chance of positively influencing students' attitudes, enabling them to read it for pleasure. The lack of reading of poetry by the participants was bound to entrench the belief that poetry was an academic genre to be read in an academic manner. Virtually caught up in a vicious circle, they were also discouraged from reading poetry for pleasure by this belief. According to Wiseman (2009), 'To bridge connections between home and school, it is important to listen carefully to young adults to understand what ways can provide

them with support while expanding our ideas about what constitutes involvement for adolescents' (p. 141). What the teachers in the present study seemed unable to appreciate was that the failure to bridge the two realms was especially detrimental to young people's engagement with poetry beyond the school environment.

Other forms of engagement with poetry outside the classroom were also not very popular amongst the participants. Only half the teachers and very few students claimed that they enjoyed listening to poetry, preferring to read it because this enabled them to engage in the kind of approach they typically adopted in the classroom (see 4.3.5). Besides the fact that students did not read poetry outside the classroom, most of them had never benefited from the experience of attending poetry readings by published poets or fellow students (see 4.1.2). The same applied to poetry slams and watching videos of people reading poetry (see 4.1.3). Despite not reading poetry for pleasure, most students claimed that they enjoyed reading song lyrics. Lyrics were preferable to poetry and the reason for which some students considered them important was that they helped with the understanding of certain songs (see 4.3.4). It seemed ironic that these students regularly read lyrics to clarify 'meaning' and did not mind doing so, presumably because lyrics were not associated with the analytical demands imposed upon poetry in the classroom. On the other hand, the writing of poetry and song lyrics were not so common amongst students, with both activities registering low percentages (see 4.1.3). One of the main reasons for this partly had to do with the belief that such creative writing required 'talent' and 'inspiration'. This belief countered the idea that creativity is dynamic and does not belong solely to gifted people (Pugliese, 2010). Boden's (2004) distinction between psychological creativity and historical creativity is important in this regard since the former is the kind of creativity that is available to everyone given that it consists of generating ideas that are new to the person rather than to the whole of humanity. Those students who had experience of writing poetry outside of school enjoyed the possibility of expressing themselves about personal issues and improving their writing skills (see 4.3.6). Most of the teachers who had written poetry admitted that this was something they had done when much younger. They also implied that they were not willing to share it with others because of the 'intimate' nature of their poetry. It seemed that for some teachers and students, poetry writing was a vehicle for the expression of personal thoughts and feelings and, as a consequence, should not be shared with others. This reinforced the idea that they needed to develop

awareness that poetry was broader than their narrow definitions. Fabb (2015), in his book on language and memory in poetry from around the world, explains that

> Any answer to the question 'What is poetry?' depends in part on who is asking, why they are asking it and what they are asking it about. Because it is contextually dependent, there can be no single right answer to the question. (pp. 11-12)

Rather than existing in the brain as a mental representation or waiting to be empirically discovered in the world, a definition of poetry can be constructed through the practice of making, classifying, and listening to poems (Prinz & Mandelbaum, 2015). This is important given the participants' limited ways of engaging with poetry. The unpopularity of non-curricular engagement with poetry manifested itself in teachers' and students' failure to read, listen to, write and watch poetry. This helped to consolidate the belief that poetry had minimal scope outside the classroom. Hence, the practices carried out in relation to poetry were largely of an academic nature. Such a belief and practices were mutually reinforcing. The gravity of this situation is made clearer when one considers the benefits for young people of reading and writing poetry (see 2.1.1; 2.1.2; 2.3; 2.8.1).

5.3 Engaging with Poetry in the Classroom

This study demonstrates that the way teachers and students engage with poetry in the classroom helps to shape their attitudes and beliefs about poetry and their engagement with it outside the classroom. If poetry is approached solely as an academic genre to be studied for examination purposes, teachers and students are unlikely to perceive it as something to be read for pleasure outside the classroom.

The engagement with poetry in class seemed to lead to ambivalent reactions on the part of teachers and students. Both of them claimed to enjoy the experience of reading and studying poetry in class but at the same time they considered it onerous (see 4.1.3; 4.3.9). Despite the fact that the teachers affirmed that in teaching poetry they gave importance to a poem's use of language and its potential for personal enrichment (see 4.3.12), in the observed lessons the emphasis was mainly on providing students with a line-by-line explanation of what a poem meant (see 4.2). In fact, both teachers and students confirmed that the main lesson gain was the ability to analyse poetry, so much so that the term 'poetry lesson' was considered synonymous

with 'analysis' (see 4.3.13). However, whereas some teachers relished the analysis of poetry, most students were in awe of the challenging nature of this critical exercise (see 4.3.9). Both teachers and students implied that in class this was the only acceptable approach to poetry. As mentioned above, this was partly due to their shared conception of poetry as a difficult genre that carried hidden meanings, which could only be unravelled via analysis. While the teachers protested against this conception of poetry (see 4.3.14), they also seemed to share the examiner's belief that students' enjoyment of poetry was bound to a teacher's ability to make students understand it through explanation (see 4.3.9). In this, the participants seemingly subscribed to Kivy's (2011) idea that 'poetry is paraphrasable, which is to say, can be interpreted as to meaning, if meaning it has' (pp. 376-377). Such a thesis is refuted by Lamarque's (2009b) claim that

> Reading a poem *as poetry* demands the assumption of form-content unity. The indivisibility of form and content is not something that is *discovered* in works – more in this, less in that, not in this one at all – it is something that the practice of reading poetry *imposes* on a work. (p. 411)

The participants' belief that, in reading poetry, content could be explained apart from form was probably what led them to identify themselves with the approach to poetry described in the stimulus material, Billy Collins's 'Introduction to Poetry' (see 4.3.15). The teachers indicated that while they wanted to make students enjoy poetry they could not avoid being party to its 'torture'. Some of them blamed examination demands for this while a few admitted that their poetry lessons were too teacher-centred. With respect to the latter, the fact that they admitted this after reading Collins's poem might suggest that it made them reflect on their classroom practices or else that, while always conscious of their practices, they felt unwilling or helpless to effect change.

Similarly, the students' experience found its resonance in Hughes's (2009) description of how studying poetry at school consisted of a hunt for a particular meaning in a poem, a meaning that was sometimes supplied by the teacher so that it could be regurgitated in an essay. The students concurred that the reading of poetry in class usually emphasized an analytical approach to the exclusion of everything else. They pointed out that in 'torturing' poetry they were either mimicking their teachers – suggesting the idea that poetry analysis happened via the cognitive

apprenticeship model of learning (Dennen & Burner, 2008) – or else doing so out of their own accord given their awareness of what was expected of them in the examination. Adopting such an approach to a poem allowed most students to feel as if they could find the hidden meaning. They seemed to do so despite realizing that poetry could also be 'appreciated' in ways that underscored its creativity and plurality of interpretation. According to Lamarque (2009b), 'Interpretation, so naturally linked to poetic meaning, does not have paraphrase as its principal aim so much as the encouragement and enhancement of a distinctive poetic experience within readers' (p. 419). Such an experience was probably stifled by the participants' attempts to torture poems for meaning. In conducting such a practice they seemed unaware that there was 'no metaphysically pure notion of meaning that can be isolated from the network of language and thought in which our meaningful acts and utterances find their home' (Jollimore, 2009, p. 158). The emphasis placed on reading a poem for a specific meaning seemed to be linked to the teachers' scepticism about the place of literary theory in the A-level poetry classroom, which they claimed to be motivated by their concerns about students' cognitive maturity as well as by some unease about their own ability to use literary theory for the purpose of teaching poetry (see 4.3.17). In light of Britzman's (2012) idea that 'Fear of theory can be approached as a constellation of anxiety that binds teachers and students in a sadomasochistic transference' (p. 53), it was most likely that the teachers' avoidance of theory at A-level would lead their students to shrink from theory once they were expected to engage with it as undergraduates. For the examiner, knowledge of literary theory went hand in hand with the discerning ability to exploit it for the benefit of students' engagement with poetry in class. He considered the effect of the examination on teachers' and students' approach to poetry as undeniable but while conceding that this might restrict them to torture poetry one also needed to acknowledge that the examination created an opportunity for a more 'disciplined' approach. This sense of discipline extended itself to the act of writing about poetry, with respect to which teachers and students seemed aware of the need to avoid subjectivity and to restrict personal response to an essay's conclusion (see 4.3.16). The effects of assessment on classroom practices in relation to poetry have been widely documented. For example, Dymoke (2003) contends that 'The place of poetry within public examinations and the effect that this has on teachers' and pupils' perception of poetry remain significant issues for the English curriculum in the

twenty-first century' (p. 183). However, as shown above, an equally significant factor is the contribution that teachers' and students' attitudes and beliefs in relation to poetry and poetry pedagogy have on the way they approach a poem in class.

Students' engagement with poetry in the classroom seemed to be linked to their expectations in relation to the three different kinds of poetry lesson (i.e. lecture, seminar and tutorial). When evaluating their teachers' methodology, the majority of students confirmed that this was highly useful in all three lesson types (see 4.1.5). However, whereas most students deemed Wilfred Owen lectures to be enjoyable there was more ambivalence in relation to literary criticism seminars and tutorials. Their satisfaction with lesson activities was highest in the case of lectures and lowest in the case of seminars. This could possibly be a result of their expectations in relation to the three lesson types. While most students expected the teacher to occupy a central role in a lecture, in seminars and tutorials they probably expected to be given as many opportunities as possible to share their views. While the teacher was expected to 'explain' a poem in a lecture and to provide them with notes, in the other lesson types students expected to be engaged in a discussion of the chosen poem. However, this did not seem to happen and hence students ended up feeling disappointed, especially if the text was approached in the same way as in a lecture with very little room for class discussion. This ran contrary to Blocksidge's (2000) idea that the conditions typical of a seminar are the norm of poetry lessons at Advanced level and that students are used to dialogic teaching and learning. According to Nicholls (2002), during a seminar, students should be given the opportunity to develop critical thinking and the ability to engage in argumentation; one of the teacher's roles during such a lesson is that of listening. In this study, classroom observation showed that in literary criticism seminars the main lesson event consisted of the teacher explaining the poem (see 4.2.3). The level of initiation on the part of students was minimal, their participation being mostly limited to responding to teachers' open and closed questions, the latter being more common. The students' participation did not seem to be carefully planned and almost all the observed teachers failed to encourage students to work autonomously (see 4.2.4). Moreover, most of the teachers did not encourage students to come up with their own personal response to the poem and instead provided them with one specific reading of it. Cumming (2007) criticizes such pedagogy for failing to consider students' own contribution to a poetry lesson:

> If their experiences are not taken into account, then information about metaphors, alliteration, onomatopoeia and so on will have little meaning, other than as specialized knowledge that has little relevance to the constructs already in place. And, if there is no opportunity to link a child's love of playing with language with what they are expected to learn about poetry in class, then that which they have could become irrelevant and devalued in school. (p. 99)

Paradoxically, despite believing that the teacher's act of explaining poetry in all three lesson types was useful for examination purposes, students still considered seminars and tutorials to be less enjoyable because their expectations in relation to the format of these lessons were not being met. For this reason a considerable number of students claimed that changes were necessary, especially in the case of seminars. McRae (1991) argues that while an emphasis on teacher talk leads to mechanical learning, learner interaction and participation invite inductive and dynamic forms of learning. In fact, the changes that students expected to see involved primarily an increase in the proportion of student talk time (see 4.1.5). This corroborated the finding that for some students a good teacher of poetry was someone who provided students with an opportunity to express their views (4.1.6). Nonetheless, this definition was trumped by the one conceiving a good teacher as someone who explained poetry and provided students with notes containing interpretations of poems needed for examination purposes. This probably confirmed why the students considered their teachers' methodology as useful.

Another factor contributing to students' engagement with poetry in the classroom seemed to be their expectations in relation to the choice of poetry made in each one of the three lesson types. Whereas most students did say that they enjoyed the poems they read in Wilfred Owen lectures, many fewer of them claimed to like the poems they read in literary criticism seminars and tutorials (see 4.1.4). Besides the relevance of his work for young people (Spurr, 2004), it was also possible that one of the reasons for which students enjoyed Owen's poetry more was that it was taught by means of lectures during which they were aware that the teacher was traditionally expected to take centre stage in explaining the set text. On the other hand, in seminars and tutorials students expected to be given the opportunity to discuss the texts and even suggest poems they would like to read in class. The students indicated that their teachers did not encourage them to suggest poems to

read in the seminars even though they would like to be given this opportunity as it would help to make lessons more 'interesting' and increase the level of participation (see 4.1.4; 4.3.11). This meant that students were only exposed to those poems that their teachers considered suitable for such seminars, these usually being canonical and typical of syllabi and examination papers (see 4.2.1) as well as chosen because of personal taste (see 4.3.3). For both teachers and students, seminars served as an opportunity to read poetry, especially since they did not commonly do so outside the classroom (see 4.3.2). However, most students admitted that their lessons had not really prodded them to read poetry for pleasure. This lack of motivation to read more broadly led the examiner to complain about students' limited knowledge of poetry upon completing post-secondary education (see 4.3.2), this being mostly limited to what they had read at school (see 4.3.3). He implied that for students to have an incentive to read more poetry, teachers would need to employ a less restrictive pedagogy. For example, some students claimed that by being encouraged to suggest poems to read in the seminars they would be enabled to 'understand' poetry better and to avoid seeing it as something to be read for examination purposes only (see 4.1.4). An awareness of the importance of acknowledging students' choices leads Whatley (2003) to ask, 'How many times do teachers encourage students to talk about their reading material at home, and how many times are these choices validated? I bet I can count them on one hand' (p. 60). Not providing students with a sense of agency when it came to the choice of poetry to be read in class undermined their engagement with poetry as something that should not just be read for examination purposes but also for pleasure. This was especially so in the case of seminars, when students expected teachers to value their right to contribute.

Engagement with poetry at school seemed limited to reading poetry and writing about it. The majority of students indicated that they would welcome the opportunity to attend a poetry reading if the Department of English were to organize such an event, especially because it would help them 'understand' poetry better and to read more of it (see 4.1.2). However, a similar percentage of students claimed that they would not like the Department to organize a poetry slam given that such a competitive event would be unlikely to generate interest amongst students. The fact that almost all the students had never attended either a poetry reading or slam event suggested that apart from somewhat traditional notions of how poetry could be shared, they lacked a proper understanding of what went on in each kind of event.

Most teachers and students disagreed with the idea that creative writing of poetry should be part of the MC English syllabus, primarily because of their belief that poetry writing required a talent that one was either born with or not (see 4.1.3; 4.3.7). Sloan (2003) suggests that such conceptions are deep-rooted and pernicious. The examiner concurred with the teachers and students only in so far as believing that poetry writing should not be assessed. Moreover, for it to be taught as part of the curriculum he needed to be convinced of the ability and disposition of those tasked with the job. Teachers required the training that would allow them to teach poetry writing effectively as well as the belief that it constituted a valid way of engaging with poetry in the classroom (see 4.3.7). In this, he seemingly shared NAWE's (2010) conviction that creative writing is best fostered by teachers who are willing to engage in it themselves and who see themselves as writers. On the other hand, those teachers and students who found value in engaging in poetry writing as part of the curriculum remarked on how this activity could translate into such practical benefits as enabling students to enhance their analytical skills and empathize with the act of creative writing. This seemed to be in line with the findings of a study that investigated the role of poetry writing as a means of bolstering students' reading and analysis of unseen poetry for the purposes of a high stakes examination: 'evidence suggested that the high level of pupil engagement during the project points to the fact this approach to studying poetry, and unseen poetry in particular, may have potential for regular use during an examination course' (Lockney & Proudfoot, 2013, p. 159). In the present study, limiting students' experience of poetry to critical reading and writing helped to embed the belief that poetry was an academic genre that could not be engaged with in other equally rewarding ways and for non-academic purposes.

5.4 Teachers as Gatekeepers

This study shows that teachers' belief that poetry is a difficult genre, which can only be mediated to students via their intervention, leads them to adopt a pedagogical approach to poetry that consolidates their role as gatekeepers. Teachers' practices in the classroom and the way they position themselves when teaching a poem affects students' engagement with poetry. Teachers help to create a situation of dependency on the part of students and entrench the conception of poetry as a genre that is best engaged with for academic purposes rather than read for personal pleasure.

One of the ways by which the teachers positioned themselves as gatekeepers to poetry was by controlling the choice of poems to be read in class. This was especially so in the case of literary criticism seminars given that choice was not determined by the syllabus or departmental procedures. For Connolly and Smith (2003), despite the fact that teachers cannot dispense with their authority due to their experience as readers, they can mitigate the effects of this authority by discovering a poem for the first time together with their students. This is in line with the idea that student engagement is more likely to occur if they are provided with an element of choice with respect to the texts read in class (Beach et al., 2006; Xerri, 2014a). By being empowered to choose what they would like to read in class, students will be encouraged to stop seeing themselves as passive recipients of knowledge. The study's participants confirmed that the poems that were discussed in the seminars were practically always chosen by teachers (see 4.1.4; 4.3.11). Some students agreed with this because of the idea that teachers were more knowledgeable about which poems were typical of the kind that usually featured in the examination. In fact, in the observed lessons teachers focused on poems that besides being highly canonical were also popular with syllabus and examination panels (see 4.2.1). These poems also happened to be written by some of the poets the teachers listed as their favourites (see 4.3.3), despite the admission on the part of most teachers that they did not read poetry for pleasure given its 'academic' connotations (see 4.3.2). The examiner implied that for students to read more poetry teachers needed to act as role models of enthusiastic readers (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009) in the poetry classroom. The failure to display such behaviour could have possibly entrenched the idea that poetry was solely an academic genre. Moreover, by controlling what kind of poetry students read in class, the teachers were positioning themselves as authoritative figures in relation to what poetry was worthy of lesson activities.

If a lesson's emphasis is primarily on helping students to understand a poem via explanation, teachers are enacting the role of gatekeepers to the text's meaning. The prevalence of teacher input is a result of the act of teachers adopting the stance of 'gatekeepers' through whose 'offices' (Tweddle et al., 1997, p. 50) students read the poem. This is even more so if teachers are reluctant to enable students to adopt a variety of critical lenses when reading a poem (see 2.5). In this study, the majority of students associated a good teacher of poetry with the act of 'explaining' a poem and providing them with notes about it (see 4.1.5; 4.1.6). Those students who disagreed

with this definition highlighted the significance of having teachers who actively encouraged student participation and interaction in poetry lessons. While talking about the empowerment of students via poetry workshops, Wiseman (2011) postulates that 'Re-envisioning the curriculum to include student experiences involves a shift in power, which requires that literacy be defined, taught and understood so that all students can contribute in the classroom' (p. 71). Classroom observation confirmed that student initiations occurred far less than teacher explanations, which were delivered by the teacher from the front of the classroom while facing the students (see 4.2). Both the classroom layout and main lesson event helped to emphasise the power dynamic between teacher and students vis-à-vis the text's meaning. In most of the observed sessions, the line-by-line analysis of a poem was conducted exclusively by the teachers, who seemed to indicate that theirs was the only possible reading of the text (see 4.2.2; 4.2.4). Students' personal response to the poem was only encouraged by a few teachers, who in almost all the sessions failed to create opportunities for student interaction and active participation. This contradicted the teachers' claim that during their poetry lessons they sought to cultivate students' personal enrichment (see 4.3.12) and that they encouraged students to include their personal response in their essays about poetry (see 4.3.16). The teachers' and examiner's belief that poetry possessed an element of difficulty made them value the act of explaining a poem to students in order for them to understand it (see 4.3.9). This belief seemed to have been inherited by the students who admitted that they relied on the teacher's explanation when reading a poem, especially because they considered the teacher as knowing the poem's 'meaning' (see 4.3.15). According to Dias and Hayhoe (1988), poetry pedagogy has engendered the view that a poem has a hidden meaning that will only be communicated to a select few. Most of the participants confessed that the way poetry was approached in class helped to galvanise the idea that every poem had a meaning and that students were meant to imitate teachers' way of 'torturing' out that meaning, especially because students were expected to do this in the examination. By adopting the stance of gatekeepers to poetry, some teachers helped to consolidate students' belief that a poem would remain inscrutable as long as a teacher was not present to help them unravel its meaning by means of a highly analytical approach.

5.5 Conclusion

The above sections discuss the main issues highlighted by means of the analysis of the different sets of findings presented in Chapter 4. These sections also seek to link the discussion of the findings to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The conclusions, implications, recommendations and limitations of this study are put forward in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

This study explores the relationship between teachers' and students' attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry. By means of a mixed methods approach, I attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. How do teachers and students approach poetry in class?
2. What are the attitudes and beliefs of teachers and students in relation to poetry and the study of poetry?
3. What is the relationship between these attitudes and beliefs, and the way poetry is approached in class?

In the sections below, I present the main conclusions to be derived from this study in relation to how the findings answer these questions. The chapter discusses the study's implications for the main stakeholders in the field of poetry education, namely teachers, students, and examiners. It also evaluates the study's main contributions to poetry education research. Moreover, on the basis of each set of conclusions and implications, I put forward recommendations for possible developments in attitudes, beliefs and practices. Finally, this chapter discusses the study's limitations and outlines future research directions.

6.1 Conclusions and Implications

This study suggests that teachers and students shared similar conceptions of poetry, believing it to be the preserve of talented people who were born with a gift for writing poetry. This Romantic notion of poetry extended itself to seeing the genre as a vehicle that was primarily used for the communication of emotion. This emotive association meant that the participants considered poetry as being abstract in nature and difficult to define and understand. Poetry was deemed to be an inspired form of creativity made up of hidden meanings that once unearthed could provide the reader with some kind of wisdom, very much similar to Heaney's (1980) notion of poetry as divination or Hughes's (1994) conception of the poet as a shamanic figure engaging the reader in a magical ritual. Partly for this reason, the participants valued the study of poetry and reckoned its place on the curriculum to be fully justified. However, this study indicates that by mystifying poetry in this manner the participants were at the same time restricting their approach to the genre. By boosting poetry's cachet, the participants imbued it with ineffable qualities that could only be apprehended by

means of the analytical exercise that is typically conducted in class and expected of students in the examination. In a way, their approach was almost analogous to biblical exegesis. This mystification of poetry led the participants to perceive it as a difficult genre. Analysis was seemingly the only way in which this difficulty could be tackled. Both teachers and students gave a lot of importance to this set of skills and considered them to be the main objective of a poetry lesson. This study suggests that due to this conception of difficulty, poetry in class was largely approached as a text that needed to be analysed for meaning even if this meaning might remain elusive. The chief examiner encouraged such a conception, too. In fact, the participants perceived the examination as nurturing an analytical approach to unseen poems made up of hidden meaning. Literary criticism seminars were deemed to be the means by which students could develop the analytical skills needed to identify an unseen poem's meaning on their own in the examination. But before they could eventually do it on their own the teacher had to model how to analyse a poem; hence, in class, teachers were in a position of power as they held the keys to a poem's reading and meaning. The prospect of having to do this autonomously made the students feel anxious about poetry; it also undermined their enjoyment of literary criticism seminars in particular. These seminars encouraged students to perceive poetry as being made up of hidden meanings, which were almost comparable to riddles. Their conception of poetry seemed limited to this defining quality. In fact, in order for them to appreciate a text as 'poetic' it had to possess a deep kind of meaning that could only be fathomed by means of analysis. Just like their teachers, the students' focus on meaning meant that they prioritized the reading of poetry above any other kind of experience of the genre.

The main ramifications of these deeply entrenched attitudes and beliefs are that poetry ends up being perceived as something bound to the classroom context and that any attempt to read a poem for personal pleasure is bound to be hindered by the challenge of having to unravel its meaning. The participants inflated poetry with cachet but in the process its difficulty acted as a barrier to accessibility. Until now the idea that the lofty status of poetry could be partly responsible for undermining students' engagement has not been given sufficient consideration by research on poetry education. This study suggests that the stress laid on its transformative and illuminating potential inflates its cachet and helps to cultivate attitudes and beliefs that consider poetry to be a 'difficult' genre that requires an analytical approach in

order for it to be properly understood. The complicity of the participants in amplifying poetry's cachet helped to place it on top of a pedestal that was just too high for it to be accessible in a non-academic context.[9]

This study highlights the existence of a lack of engagement with poetry outside the classroom context. The teachers and students indicated that they did not read poetry for pleasure and that this was because the reading of poetry was more demanding. This was probably due to their limited conception of what qualified as poetry. For the participants, poetry was associated almost exclusively with study; when reading it they felt obliged to analyse it. This marred any attempt to read it for pleasure. Despite the fact that analysis could lead to pleasure, the participants pointed out that analysis was largely a cause of anxiety or else associated with work and hence not something they would engage in for relaxation. The analytical approach adopted in class seemed to dispel any interest in reading poetry outside of school. Both the teachers and students seemed to exhibit a knowledge of poetry limited to the canonical poets studied within the educational context. The teachers did not position themselves as role models of the kind of enthusiastic poetry readers who could encourage students to read poetry for pleasure. They set themselves up as individuals who were highly knowledgeable about poetry as a genre to be studied academically but not enjoyed in the home environment. This did not just apply to the reading of poetry but also manifested itself in other forms of engagement with poetry, including writing and listening to poetry, and attending or participating in spoken poetry events. The lack of enthusiasm for such forms of engagement seemed to indicate that poetry was a genre that could only be approached in the academic manner of analysing a text through close reading. This belief seemed responsible for a lack of engagement with poetry outside the classroom but this absence of engagement was also responsible for entrenching the belief that poetry could only be engaged in the classroom and by means of a traditionally academic manner. The participants seemed to fail to appreciate the value of the idea that 'To see the world through a poem and to allow one's view of the world to be reimagined by a poem is a personal experience, not just an academic one' (Robillard, Bach, & Gulden, 2015, p. 89).

---

[9] In the case of other genres, there are examples of research-based initiatives that have attempted to enhance students' engagement with the literary texts typically studied at school. For instance, Winston (2015) describes how a project run by the Royal Shakespeare Company transformed teaching in schools so that young people considered Shakespeare's plays to be more accessible, enjoyable and relevant.

This study shows that teachers and students approached poetry in class in a highly restricted manner. Teachers focused on explaining a poem to their students and the emphasis was mostly on what the poem meant. The teachers' explanations guided the students through a line-by-line analysis of a text; even when this was carried out in a literary criticism seminar, students' contributions were limited. Both teachers and students seemed to believe that this was the right way of approaching poetry in class, especially since poetry was conceived of as difficult because of its hidden meanings. The act of analysing a poem was deemed to be the means by which these meanings could be elucidated. The participants admitted that analysis resembled the torture mentioned in Collins's poem, and they identified with the situation described in this poem. Due to examination pressures and shared attitudes and beliefs, the participants felt constrained to adopt such an approach toward poetry. However, this did not mean that the students were satisfied with the fact that their seminars were teacher-centred. They also seemed unhappy with the choice of poems for these seminars and with the fact that it was always the teacher who selected the poems to be read in class, these poems being mostly canonical and typical of examination papers. What seemed to be paradoxical about the students' attitudes was that, while they colluded in the approach to poetry adopted in their seminars by means of their beliefs about poetry and concerns with the examination, they were also aware that poems should be approached in a more engaging manner. Whether this awareness was developed through their earlier experiences of poetry in primary education or through exposure to poetry in non-assessment contexts merits further research.

This study demonstrates that by adopting an analytical approach to poetry and nurturing the belief that it was a difficult genre, teachers positioned themselves as gatekeepers to a poem's meaning in the classroom. This led students to feel dependent on their teachers in order to understand a poem. They came to see poetry as a genre that could only be engaged with at school and solely in an academic manner. The study indicates a contradiction between how teachers spoke about their role within poetry pedagogy and their actual practices. Teachers' role as gatekeepers was manifested by the fact that they chose which poems were read in class and how these were to be read. The emphasis placed on explaining canonical poems typical of examination papers meant that there was a significant disparity in the balance of power between teachers and students. Student participation was minimal and not

actively encouraged. The teachers' role as gatekeepers helped to consolidate students' belief that a poem had a hidden meaning that could only be accessed by means of a teacher's guidance.

By acting as gatekeepers to poetry, teachers limited students' ability to come up with multiple readings informed by different critical lenses. This study indicates that one of the reasons for which literary theory still finds it hard to take root within the post-secondary teaching of English might consist of teachers' attitudes and beliefs. The perceived difficulty of literary theory seemed to discourage them from using it in their poetry lessons due to the fear that it might dampen students' enthusiasm. However, there was also a reluctance to incorporate it within their lessons because of their awareness that they might be somewhat out of their depth if they attempted to do so. As pointed out by the examiner, this highlights the need for teachers who are positively inclined to harness the benefits of literary theory and who have been trained in its use.

This study shows that some teachers and students subscribed to the proposal that poetry writing possessed the potential to develop students' ability to engage in critical reading and to help them gain other advantages. Nonetheless, there was also scepticism with respect to the suggestion that poetry could actually be composed inside the classroom and that such writing could be assessed. This was partly due to the idea that teachers 'are often more used to responding to poetry written by others than writing their own and this simple fact tends to imply that school lessons are focused on the response to poems' (Stevens, 2001, p. 100). Teachers' and students' views in relation to what should feature in the MC English syllabus and what should be excluded from it were inspired by similar attitudes and beliefs. Resistance to the inclusion of poetry writing was spurred by their idea that this was a result of inherent qualities that could not be cultivated at school. In contrast, the examiner's views on the issue were informed by an awareness that teacher education programmes at both pre-service and in-service levels were already inadequate when it came to training teachers how to teach poetry, let alone in enabling them to encourage students to write poetry. The participants' scepticism with respect to the place of poetry writing on the MC English syllabus was out of synch with the idea that teachers can instigate a high level of engagement with poetry by encouraging students to practise poetry writing in class. In fact, the UK poet laureate Carol Ann Duffy (as cited in Moorhead, 2011) admits that she fell in love with poetry after being inspired by her teachers to

start writing. At the same time, MC English students cannot be expected to benefit from poetry writing and in the process maximise their enjoyment of the genre unless teachers' knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs are targeted by appropriate training that will hopefully allow them to act as a catalyst for an embrace of poetry writing on the part of their students. This is especially necessary given that 'those English teachers who are not poets frequently find it problematic to develop – to teach, in fact – the drafting and final writing of poetry with any confidence' (Stevens, 2001, p. 100).

The effects of assessment on classroom practices in relation to poetry still seem germane to any discussion on poetry education in the twenty-first century (Dymoke, 2003; Motion, 2012). This study confirms the view that assessment is one of the main factors responsible for teachers' and students' common approach to poetry in class. Their approach seemed to be determined by modes of assessment, their anxiety in relation to the examination, and their beliefs as to what was expected of candidates when critically engaging with a poem. The implication of this is that if poetry is approached solely as an academic genre to be studied for examination purposes, teachers and students are unlikely to perceive it as something to be read and written for pleasure.

The fact that in the MC English examination candidates' knowledge and skills in relation to poetry are assessed solely by means of essay questions is somewhat problematic. When this mode of assessment is given exclusivity there is a risk that the washback effect on teaching and learning is negative. Basing assessment only on an approach that when misapplied leads students to cram their heads with reproducible knowledge or to believe that their task is to 'torture' a poem is fraught with danger. As shown by this study, classroom practices tended to be restricted in nature. Teachers focused on enabling students to analyse poems for the purpose of performing successfully on the examination. Lessons tended to be highly teacher-centred and generated the misconception that a poem possessed a hidden meaning. The perils of such a situation underscore the need for more inclusive approaches to assessment in poetry education, ones that invite a variety of ways of engaging with poetry during a course of study and that challenge conservative attitudes and beliefs with respect to poetry.

This study builds on previous research highlighting issues related to 'teachers' perceptions of poetry, confidence and the support needed for examination

level teaching of a genre that is in danger of becoming increasingly unfamiliar to many students' (Dymoke, 2012, p. 395). Nevertheless, unlike most other research in poetry education conducted up to now (Benton, 1999, 2000; Dymoke, 2001, 2002, 2012, 2013; O'Neill, 2006, 2008), the results of this study show that to point an accusatory finger solely at assessment is to ignore its collusion with the shared attitudes and beliefs held by teachers and students. Rather than on its own, it is in combination with these shared attitudes and beliefs that assessment plays a pivotal role in shaping engagement with poetry. The practice of treating poetry as a genre set apart from all others, because of the notion that it is abstruse, is as damaging as the practice of encouraging only conventional ways of responding to poetry. Associating poetry with some form of underlying meaning that can only be extracted through a methodical analysis of every single word on the page only helps to inflate its cachet in a way that does poetry a huge disservice. As Simmons (2014) points out, 'the in-class disembowelment of a poem's meaning can diminish the personal, even transcendent, experience of reading a poem'. While meaning is surely important in both the writing and reading of poetry, it should not be the sole focus of a poetry lesson. Gillis (2014) explains that

> What we might learn from a poem, the message or meaning it might impart, is likely to be bound up with its pleasures. And so, the best way to study a poem is to try, in the first instance, to enjoy it. (p. 37)

The present study is meant to encourage teachers, students, syllabus developers, examiners, teacher educators, and other stakeholders to counteract the effect of those factors that consort with one another to shape the questionable way poetry is sometimes approached in class. By reflecting on the reasons for such an approach, they might feel motivated to stimulate change.

6.2 Poetry Education Research

The conclusions and implications outlined above demonstrate that this study's main claim for originality is bound to how it has helped to push forward our understanding of poetry education by focusing on an area that has been given scant consideration so far. Up to now no study in the field has concentrated exclusively on investigating the relationship between the attitudes and beliefs held by teachers and students, and their practices. The value of the insights provided by this study is highly significant for

poetry education research as they indicate the mutual influence exerted by attitudes and beliefs on the one hand, and practices on the other. In addition, the formation of these insights is partly due to another major contribution of this study that is methodological in nature. As argued elsewhere (Xerri, in press-c), this study addresses a gap in the literature on interview stimulus material given that minimal attention has been given to the use of poetry for this purpose. Moreover, this study illustrates how the use of poetry as interview stimulus material can help poetry education research to anchor thoughts about poetry and pedagogy through the foregrounding of teachers' and students' attitudes, beliefs and practices. After the above discussion of the study's findings in relation to this specific focus, its contribution to research methodology now merits further discussion.

In a journal entry he wrote in 1899 when still a college student, the poet Wallace Stevens (1996) reflected on the learning held by English poets:

> I think they used study as a contrast to poetry. The mind cannot always live in a 'divine ether.' The lark cannot always sing at heaven's gate. There must exist a place to spring from—a refuge from the heights, an anchorage of thought. Study gives this anchorage: study ties you down; and it is the occasional wil[l]ful release from this voluntary bond that gives the soul its occasional overpowering sense of lyric freedom and effort. (p. 27)

Stevens's (1996) description of study as a means of anchoring thought is for me analogous to the role played by research on the teaching and learning of poetry. Due to the perception that poetry possesses an ethereal nature and is thus difficult to comprehend, teachers and students might share certain attitudes and beliefs in relation to poetry and poetry pedagogy that lead to the perpetuation of a number of classroom practices that undermine engagement with poetic texts (Xerri, 2013a, in press-d). Poetry education research can serve to temper teachers' and students' flights of fancy by exposing the link between such attitudes and beliefs, and practices. By revealing this connection, the researcher can attempt to demonstrate that the way poetry is approached in the classroom is due to entrenched attitudes and beliefs with respect to poetic texts and not necessarily because of any intrinsic qualities in poetry. In this way poetry education research can serve to anchor thoughts about the genre and its pedagogy.

The stimulus material used in my study served as an anchorage of thought in that it yielded a substantial amount of rich data about teachers' and students' attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry and poetry pedagogy. By identifying with the situation in Collins's poem and being given the opportunity of discussing their individual experiences of poetry lessons, the stimulus material led the participants to think deeply about how they approach poetry and why they approach it in the way they do. The stimulus material struck a chord with the participants in that it enabled them to reflect on the potential limitations of their approach to poetry. The act of discussing the situation in Collins's poem encouraged them to evaluate their own classroom experiences. While teachers came to acknowledge the possible shortcomings of their pedagogy, especially its gatekeeping and teacher-centred qualities, students seemed to experience the freedom to discuss the poem without the controlling guidance of their teachers. The one-on-one discussion of the stimulus material provided students with the incentive to assess their role within a poetry lesson and to recognise that a number of factors, including the examination and the attitudes and beliefs they shared with their teachers, forged their approach to poetry. The fact that the teachers' and students' experiences resonated with those of poets writing about their own experiences of poetry lessons (e.g. Hughes, 2009) and the fact that their conceptions of poetry mirrored those of certain canonical poets (e.g. Romantics) and established literary critics (e.g. Leavis) seems to suggest that poetry education in the A-level English classroom in Malta is still highly traditional, with developments being arrested by an adherence to deep-seated attitudes and beliefs and by the perpetuation of familiar practices.

The fact that the participants' discussion of poetry and poetry pedagogy was instigated by a poem is important in that it acted as a reflexive exercise. By being asked to evaluate a poem that focused on poetry pedagogy, they were compelled to become aware of their approach to poetry in class. This was not something that they might have given a lot of thought to in the past, however, in the course of discussing Collins's poem both teachers and students answered at length and in a highly personal manner. They reflected about the genre, the pedagogy employed, the interaction patterns in their lessons, their attitudes and beliefs in relation to poetry, and the reasons for which they approached it in the way they did. By the end of each interview it seemed clear that every participant's discussion of the stimulus material had enabled them to develop a series of insights into what usually happened in poetry

lessons and why this happened. Moreover, the stimulus material led them to consider alternative approaches to poetry.

This study has illustrated how the use of poetry as interview stimulus material can strengthen the efforts of poetry education researchers to shed light on the connection between teachers' and students' attitudes and beliefs, and their practices in relation to poetry. Given the fact that most teachers and students of English in post-secondary education in Malta are used to the act of talking about poetry (but not necessarily its pedagogy), my choice of Collins's poem as stimulus material led me to develop a better understanding of their approach to poetry in class and the reasons for it. Depending on the nature of their inquiry and context, poetry education researchers can choose relevant poems that have the potential to stimulate a discussion about specific attitudes, beliefs and practices. In this way, they can help the field to anchor thoughts about poetry and pedagogy. Poems as stimulus material encourage teachers and students to reflect on their attitudes, beliefs and practices and to critically evaluate the connection between these elements. The act of using poetry to discuss the way it is approached in class helps to demystify the genre and foreground teachers' and students' conceptions of poetry and its pedagogy. The anchorage of thought that occurs when attitudes, beliefs and practices are deconstructed is essential for poetry education given that young people's engagement with the genre is still heavily undermined by the notion that poetry is difficult and can only be read in an analytical manner for examination purposes. The potential of poetry as interview stimulus material in poetry education research is highly significant due to the fact that it makes the act of probing attitudes, beliefs and practices even more engaging and immediate (see 3.9).

6.3 Recommendations

On the basis of the conclusions of this study it is recommended that teachers, students and examiners be provided with support to develop their attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry. My ongoing research on poetry education in Anglophone countries – consisting of classroom observation sessions and interviews with teachers, teacher educators and poets – has so far generated highly similar findings to those presented in this study. In addition, the many discussions I have had with teachers and academics at conferences in at least 15 countries have shown me that the issues discussed in this study seem to be a concern for educators in other

parts of the world. This means that the recommendations hereunder are not only aimed at reforming poetry education in Malta but will also resonate in international contexts where teachers' and students' approach to poetry is constrained by certain entrenched attitudes and beliefs and heavily informed by an assessment-driven culture.

Teacher education and development should serve the purpose of broadening teachers' conceptions of poetry, enabling them to see it as a multimodal genre that can be read in multiple ways and not solely in order to extract hidden meaning from a canonical poem for examination purposes. In this way they can influence their own students who most often share their attitudes and beliefs in relation to poetry and poetry pedagogy. Considering the nature and possible definitions of poetry is useful for both teachers and students (Stevens, 2001) given that it can lead to enhanced engagement in class (Pike, 2000b). In fact, Fleming and Stevens (2015) consider it 'useful to examine the concept of "poetry", which may be a source of bewilderment or difficulty for pupils unless the term itself is subject to some discussion' (p. 182). The definition of what counts as poetry needs to be adequately ample so as to take into account as many different forms of poetry as possible and not just those typical of syllabi and examinations. Comparing the present day to the time in which the Bullock Report was published, McGuinn (2014a) suggests that 'Perhaps part of the reason that students seem apprehensive or indifferent is that…they are still not getting enough exposure to poetry in school; and that the poetry they do encounter tends to belong to the same narrow categories' (p. 10). Teachers' and students' attitudes and beliefs should be revised in such a way that they come to see poetry as a democratic and inclusive genre, not just something produced by talented individuals who are 'born' poets. Teachers and students should be encouraged to see poetry as something that besides being read critically in class can also be read for pleasure. In fact, Borges (2000) believes that an exaggerated preoccupation with a poem's meaning diverts attention from the beauty of poetry: 'I know for a fact that we *feel* the beauty of a poem before we even begin to think of a meaning' (p. 84). In this regard, teachers and students need to develop an understanding of how aesthetic things are valued. Theune and Broad (2015) explain that 'Many of the greatest poets possess axiological self-awareness. To help students apply or transform their literary values as they read and write poetry, teachers must promote such self-awareness' (p. 180). Teachers and students should not consider poetry to be the preserve of

published poets but should conceive of it as something capable of being written by teachers and young people. As Fleming and Stevens (2015) point out, 'The danger in restricting the definition…is that pupils' attempts to write poetry may need to be subject to unreasonable criteria' (p. 180). In thinking of poetry, teachers should emphasise its accessibility rather than its difficulty. They should be encouraged to challenge notions that help to mystify poetry and burden it with too much cachet. In this way they can allay students' anxiety in relation to poetry and help them to view it as enjoyable. Most importantly, this would enable teachers and students to become aware of the powerful influence exerted by their attitudes and beliefs on the way they approach poetry.

Teacher education and development should also aim to enrich teachers' reading of poetry and enable them to position themselves as enthusiastic readers who read poetry for pleasure in their leisure time rather than just reading it in class to cover the examination syllabus. This is important in light of the fact that

> Teachers…for whom reading is significant in their own lives, who read more than the texts they teach and explicitly share their reading practices and preferences with children, appear to have the confidence to teach both effectively and affectively and draw in reluctant readers. (Cremin, 2013, p. 13)

By acting as role models for their students, teachers will be able to inspire students to read poetry more regularly and to guide them in reading more extensively. This would help to bridge the kinds of reading conducted in the school and home domains. Teachers should be able to engage students not only with canonical poems typical of examination papers but also with more contemporary poetry. The importance of this is highlighted by Retallack and Spahr's (2006) argument:

> The most vital and intelligent contemporary poetries should not wait for decades to enter the consciousness of literature students. If…poetry is the linguistic laboratory of the times in which one lives; if it is the live culture of our language practices as they are being pressured to acknowledge and articulate the constantly shifting residue of ongoing history; if to experience the poetries of one's times is to experience language on the edge of new reckonings—then students should have access to this work now. (p. 6)

Teachers' and students' exposure to poetry should not consist solely of print, but it should also encompass spoken word poetry and other multimodal representations of the genre. This is important because resistance to poetry can be overcome and engagement increased through something like the visual presentation of poetry (Tippings, 2008). Emert (2015) claims that 'Poetry…relying as it often does on imagistic and emotionally resonant language, invites us to consider the use of available multimedia technologies to deepen students' understanding and appreciation' (p. 64). Similarly, enabling students to attend and participate in poetry readings and slam events is fundamental. Such events enhance young people's engagement with poetry (Sprackland, 2008), challenge their conception of the genre as something printed rather than oral and auditory (Gordon, 2009), and help to improve their writing about poetry for examination purposes (Powell, 2009).

By means of poetry writing workshops, teachers and students should be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to write their own poetry and thus challenge the notion that this genre is only meant to be read rather than written. McGuinn (2014a) remarks that a 'discussion of the sounds, rhythms and images of poems is more likely to flourish when the didactic classroom is transformed into a writers' workshop' (p. 14). Such workshops should also serve to extend teachers' and students' definitions of poetry writing so that they are able to engage in multimodal textual construction (Archer, 2010; Callahan & King, 2011). This seems paramount given research that shows 'how some students have used digital poetry as a vehicle for expressing their own identities as individuals and as change agents to communicate their understandings of global issues' (Hughes, 2013, p. 167). Moreover, 'Writing poetry in new media blurs the boundary between a poem and its performance and reminds us of poetry's oral origins' (Hughes, 2009, p. 227). Teachers and young people should not be encouraged to foster the belief that poetry writing is something exceptional that can only be engaged in by exceptional individuals. Such a belief has the capacity to deter teachers and students from seeing themselves as capable of writing creatively (Xerri, 2013c), thus distancing themselves from it. The poet Margaret Simon (2012) explains that when teaching poetry writing it is important to provide students with ownership: 'the students become writers. They believe they are writers because we do the things that writers do' (p. 92). The act of occupying poetry is beneficial because it helps to overcome their fear of it (Regis, 2013). This applies equally to teachers. If it is deemed

desirable that an increasing number of young people have recourse to poetry writing as a means of developing their writing ability and discovering an avenue for personal expression, then it is imperative that teachers position themselves as creative practitioners (Xerri, 2013d). This is due to the fact that teachers are role models for their students; their enthusiasm (or lack thereof) for poetry writing is infectious. Hence, it is necessary to break the vicious circle of teachers who fail to inspire an enjoyment of poetry writing in students that subsequently fail to inspire their own students once some of them embark on a teaching career. According to James (2005), 'Part of the teacher's role is to invite learners to own language and make it useful to them, not just see it as something to be learnt from the page' (p. 45). In order for students to recurrently engage in poetry writing, teachers need to cultivate their own creative practices by stepping into the shoes of a poet and not depend exclusively on sending students to workshops run by established poets. Brooks (2007) affirms that 'a teacher's job is to reach students and support their growth. Sometimes that work may involve the teacher sharing a personal experience or passion as a way of cultivating a student's experiences' (p. 189). The poet Suzanna E. Henshon (2012) explains that

> when you bring your own poetry into your class, you step outside your role as a teacher and become a fellow writer with your students guiding them toward creativity, lyrical language, and concise images. You become a teacher of poetry, and a poet who teaches by example. (p. 116)

A negative attitude on the part of teachers has the potential to impinge on their students' perception and enjoyment of poetry writing.

In order to facilitate the task of inspiring students to write poetry, teachers need to be provided with support to develop the required knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs to engage in poetry writing. In light of this study's finding that teachers opposed the idea of assessing poetry writing, such support might also focus on the knowledge and dispositions required for teachers to engage in the assessment of poetry writing. This seems particularly important given research showing that teachers 'find themselves tongue-tied when invited to comment on the draft of a poem. They lacked a literary discourse to provide them with tools for constructive critique, either of their own or of others' poems' (Locke, 2013, p. 38). The writing and assessment of poetry remain a constraint for less confident teachers (Dymoke,

2014). The incorporation of writing workshops into teacher education and development can play a vital role in delivering necessary support. Besides equipping teachers with the competences required to write creatively, writing workshops have the potential to increase teachers' confidence and help them to develop the belief that poetry writing should be engaged in for its intrinsic worth. In this way, teachers will be able to democratize poetry writing and allow as many students as possible to reap its benefits in the process of learning English. Just as young people are taught to read poetry and other genres for the sake of personal enrichment, they should also be taught to write poetry for the same purpose. In fact, McVey (2008) maintains that 'Writers (and teachers) in education should work to promote both reading and a love of reading, and writing as pleasure and process, not just a means to an end' (p. 293). Writing workshops are highly significant for teachers as they help them to position themselves creatively, both inside and outside the classroom. As Cremin (2006) points out, 'in order to support children's creative development as writers, teachers need extended opportunities to engage artistically and creatively as writers themselves' (p. 415). Writing workshops can contribute to the growth of a culture of creativity amongst educators and the young people they are tasked with inspiring.

In order for students to engage in creative practices in the poetry lesson, teachers need to cultivate their own personal and professional creativity. As discussed above, 'The promotion of creativity and innovation within initial teacher education courses may be a significant first step' (Hennessy & Mannix McNamara, 2011, p. 219). However, continued support throughout teachers' careers is equally essential and this entails innovative forms of CPD that tap their creativity and aim to develop a positive attitude towards its place in the poetry classroom. This would enable teachers to evaluate their beliefs about creativity so that they cease to see it as an elitist pursuit or quality. Woodward (2015) explains that

> If…we redefine creativity to include the everyday doing, making, adapting and creating that is part of all of our lives – if we give ourselves time and space and permission to play with this, to work on this, we can create. (p. 156)

By being spurred to position themselves as creative practitioners, teachers will be more willing to put pressure on the powers that be so that the curriculum truly embraces the value of creativity in poetry teaching and learning. This seems crucial

given that 'There exists an urgent need to counter many established educational practices, such as the uncritical adoption of standardisation, passive assimilation, methodological rigidity and suppression of voice' (Hennessy & Mannix McNamara, 2013, p. 17). Nonetheless, for teachers' creativity to flourish the educational ecology in which they work needs to embrace creativity. In fact, Constantinides (2015) maintains that

> Helping teachers to develop their ability to think creatively, including creative thinking skills training, is not going to be enough, and the effects of this training may not be sustainable unless there is a positive culture encouraging and facilitating as well as demonstrating creativity. (p. 118)

The promotion of students' creativity depends on teachers' ability and willingness to employ a creative pedagogy and to foster their own creativity. Opportunities for them to do so are equally important.

Teacher education and development should target practitioners' knowledge and skills in relation to poetry pedagogy so that they are able to employ effective approaches to poetry in the classroom. Some of the characteristics of an effective poetry pedagogy are listed by Fleming and Stevens (2015), who invite teachers to: engage students with a wide variety of poems; employ flexibility in the way a poem is read and studied; use the most appropriate methodology for a specific poem rather than applying the same method for all poems; encourage students to be active in their approach to poetry rather than subjecting them to question and answer sessions every time a poem is read in class; provide students with the necessary background to a poem before expecting them to analyse it; enable students to experience a poem before studying it in detail; and help students to note the characteristics of poetry as a genre when compared to other text types (p. 193). The pedagogy used by teachers should not be restricted to helping students understand a poem's meaning but should capitalise on poetry's creative use of language, especially since this study seems to confirm Stibbs's (2000) idea that teachers and students discount the significance of a poem's aesthetic qualities. As Barrs and Styles (2013) remind us, 'the teaching of poetry needs always to keep in touch with the sensual aesthetic qualities of poetry… We all need to be re-connected, all the time, to the basics of poetry – sound, rhythm, pattern, music, play and pleasure' (p. 191). Snapper (2013) claims that 'In the teaching of poetry…we particularly see the ways in which reductive, de-aestheticized

approaches can disable the text, cutting it off from its full expression' (p. 40). He blames such pedagogy for students' resistance to poetry. Effective poetry pedagogy probably puts a premium on the aesthetic qualities of a poem.

Teachers should be able to bank on a repertoire of pedagogical approaches that would facilitate students' reading and discussion of poetry through a variety of lenses, including literary theory (Appleman, 2015; Atherton, Green, & Snapper, 2015; Gillespie, 2010; Tyson, 2015; Xerri, 2013b), reader-response theory (Harfitt & Chu, 2011; Karolides, 2000) and critical literacy (Misson & Morgan, 2006; Stevens, 2005, 2011a, 2014). When students are able to use something like critical literacy as an approach in their poetry lessons they are able to 'shift the power dynamic of the classroom from teacher expert to student expert' (Dinkins, 2014, p. 53). The adoption of such critical lenses is important given that they allow teachers and students to question their conceptions of poetry and the way these impinge on their classroom practices. In fact, Furniss and Bath (2007) remind us that 'Although we may believe that our ideas are personal to us, attention to the history of culture (of which the history of poetry is a part) reveals that our assumptions are inherited from the past and from the way our present culture relates to the past' (p. 25). Teachers should be able to employ a dialogic model of poetry teaching so that students are encouraged 'to explore a multitude of responses rather than look for a single interpretation' (Delanoy, 2005, p. 53) to a poem. It should be ensured that teachers of poetry transform their practices by being open to teaching approaches that foster a view of reading as a process involving the adoption of multiple critical perspectives. This would enable students to develop the necessary critical thinking skills expected of them in higher education and the world beyond.

Teachers should be able to utilise a range of print and digital resources to enhance teaching and learning and to expose students to poetry via different media. A multimodal approach would help to undermine some of students' attitudes and beliefs in relation to poetry. For example, McVee, Bailey and Shanahan (2008) describe how

> As students began to think about how a poem could be represented visually, aurally, or through on-screen movement, they focused on how to communicate the meanings that they wanted others to experience. This moved them away from fears that they would not produce a 'correct'

interpretation. Instead, they were intent on exploring various modalities to communicate meanings they were discovering. (p. 132)

Given the absence of a multimodal approach on the part of the teachers in this study, it might be necessary to provide them with training on how to teach poetry by means of a suite of digital tools. Despite the ever growing accessibility of digital technology, 'evidence collected from learners suggested that only a very few teachers are using technology in the most effective way' (Institute for Learning, 2010, p. 11), meaning that the majority are in need of guidance (Unsworth, Thomas, Simpson, & Asha, 2005, p. 1) when it comes to using it effectively in the classroom. This is something that a number of sources, both Maltese and international, also call for (Azzopardi, 2008; Cachia, Ferrari, Ala-Mutka, & Punie, 2010; Granić, Mifsud, & Ćukušić, 2009; National Association for the Teaching of English, 2007). This is especially important given that computer assisted learning influences teaching least as a pedagogical approach in the language classroom in Malta (Zammit & Mifsud, 2003). By means of relevant training, teachers would be able to teach poetry in a multimodal manner.

Teachers should re-evaluate their role in a poetry lesson from that of gatekeepers to individuals who invite multiple readings and personal responses to a poem. Smith and Connolly (2005) show that when a teacher's authority over the interpretation of a poem is reduced, students are much more likely to engage in dialogue about the text. In literary criticism seminars especially, teachers should avoid a teacher-centred approach by maximising student involvement through individual contributions, pair work and group work. This is fundamental since seminars have the potential to encourage students to become aware of their assumptions and unpick them, as well as expose students to a wide range of opinions, thus showing them that there is no right answer when studying English Literature (Gibson, 2010, p. 4). Given that learning might be more effective when teachers are aware of their teaching styles and learners are aware of their learning styles, it is perhaps important that teachers employ a pedagogy that caters for the different learning styles of their students and encourage them to exploit these styles for autonomous learning (Rosenberg, 2013). Teachers should be aware that the main lesson event should not always be their explanation of a poem; student initiations should be encouraged and there should be plenty of open questions on the part of

teachers. Despite the fact that it is desirable for students to be taught how to analyse a poem, this should not be the only activity they are engaged in in class. Students should be enabled to adopt a variety of ways of reading a poem and encouraged to share their personal and creative responses to it. Heavily influenced by Rosenblatt's (1995) theories, Burdan (2004) endorses an approach that views reading as a transaction in which

> neither reader nor text is a passive object. Instead, both are active in the creation of meaning and both are affected by this creative act. From this perspective, reading is transformed from a passive process in which meaning is received from or found within a text to a dynamic, dialectical process through which meaning, contingent and plastic, is created by both reader and text. (pp. 23-24)

Taking his cue from Rosenblatt's (1994) idea that individual readers carry their own baggage and that this has a bearing on their reading of a poem, Sedgwick (2003) proposes that young people should be encouraged to 'make each poem their own' (p. 48). Moreover, they should be invited to bring poems they would like to discuss to the lesson so that the choice of poetry to be read in class is not monopolised by the teacher in the guise of an expert (Connolly & Smith, 2002; Xerri, 2014a). Classroom activities should not be geared solely toward helping students pass the examination but aimed primarily at cultivating a lifelong engagement with poetry.

Syllabus developers and examiners should seek to use the MC English examination as a means of broadening teachers' and students' conceptions of poetry, developing their attitudes towards the genre, and enhancing classroom practices during poetry lessons. The syllabus should widen its definition of poetry to underscore a poem's creative use of language, multimodal nature, and openness to multiple readings and personal responses. It should invite engagement with a broader variety of poetry, including work by contemporary poets and different forms of poetry. It should include different modes of assessment and not just essay writing about set texts and unseen poems. For example, poetry writing should be made part of the syllabus and valued not only as a significant means of creative expression but also as a way of developing students' critical reading skills. As Cowan (2013) points out, the earlier students develop an understanding of the link between critical reading and creative practice the better it is for everyone involved. Lastly, the MC English syllabus and examination should welcome teacher involvement in their development

so that this high stakes examination can have positive washback and impact on teaching and learning (Xerri & Vella Briffa, in press-a, in press-b). This includes involving teachers in the design of examination papers and the selection of set texts. The importance of the latter is especially highlighted by a number of Maltese studies (Ebejer & Vella, 1986; Micallef & Galea, 1991; Sammut, 1999).

The above recommendations have the potential to reform the way teachers and students approach poetry in the classroom and beyond. In any educational context where teachers and students have deeply held attitudes and beliefs in relation to poetry and poetry pedagogy, and where poetry is included on the syllabus of a high stakes examination, it is possible that the genre is approached in a highly constrained manner. In such contexts it is imperative that teacher education and development is harnessed for the purpose of achieving reform in poetry education. Gordon (2014) admits that

> the thinking teachers work through when they set about teaching poetry…is largely unvoiced, tacit in practice, and difficult for the beginning teacher to access, other than through careful observation of experienced colleagues and personal trial and error in their own classrooms. (p. 1)

This thesis demonstrates that researching such thinking and concomitant attitudes and practices is highly significant, especially because teachers play a vital role in shaping students' engagement with poetry. One of the most significant recommendations of this thesis is that teacher education and development needs to support teachers to critically interrogate their attitudes, beliefs and practices, especially given the interplay between these elements (see 1.1.). In fact, Naylor and Wood (2012) affirm that 'to have a philosophy of teaching English that is our own, to give us a rationale for why we teach as we do, is crucially important for us to remember and reflect on what we do in the classroom, and by extension, with poetry' (p. 11). If teacher education and development fails to instigate such reflection, there is a risk that teachers will merely teach poetry in the way they were taught. Using the metaphor from Collins's poem, Alexander (2013) says,

> I find it fairly common that student teachers, arriving in a school on their first placement and given the responsibility of teaching some poems to an exam class, fall back on the security of teaching methodologies which

they experienced when they were pupils or even undergraduates, and the torturing of the poem into a confession…becomes a perpetuating cycle. (p. 121)

Teachers' ability to engage in critical reflection seems paramount. Such reflection should not restrict itself to poetry education but should enable teachers to engage with '*a robust professional discourse about teaching and education more generally*' (Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson, 2015, p. 638). Access to such discourse is fundamental for teacher agency, especially for educators who lack teaching qualifications and do not benefit from professional development opportunities, as is the case with most of the teachers in this study. Biesta et al. (2015) explain that

> the absence of such a discourse ties teachers to the particular beliefs that circulate in their practice and prevents them from locating such beliefs within such wider discourses. As a result the existing beliefs cannot be experienced as choices but appear as inevitable. Access to wider discourses about teaching and education would provide teachers with a perspective on the beliefs they and their colleagues hold, and would provide a horizon against which such beliefs can be evaluated. (p. 638)

Despite the fact that other factors might also be at play in forging attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry, teacher education and development can contribute toward effecting a change for the better.

6.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has a number of limitations that need to be addressed by means of further research. As a case study of the teachers and students of poetry at one post-secondary institution, the study provides an in-depth look at the attitudes, beliefs and practices of its participants. However, this in itself is a limitation given that a comparative dimension is lacking from the study. Despite anecdotal evidence indicating that poetry is approached in a similar manner at other post-secondary institutions in Malta, this can only be verified by means of a study that adopts a broader approach to the study of poetry education. Similarly, given that this study is bound to the Maltese post-secondary context, further research is required in order to explore whether there exist similarities and differences with international contexts. This is especially important given that the participants in this study were studying English as their second language. Research I conducted in Australia in 2014 and in the USA in 2015

suggests that many of the findings of this study resonate with such international contexts. An international comparative study on poetry education would be able to determine whether the relationship between attitudes, beliefs and practices established by this study is also pertinent to other L1 and L2 contexts.

The fact that this study focuses on poetry education is indicative of my partiality for the genre. However, in restricting the study solely to poetry there is the risk that poetry ends up being projected as worthy of special attention. Studies on the interplay between teachers' and students' attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to novels, short stories and drama are also necessary.[10] Further research on how song lyrics and multimodal poetry are approached is also required. Despite the fact that this study attempted to do so by means of the student survey, further research is needed in order to establish similarities and differences in terms of how a group of participants approach different genres. For example, a study providing respondents with the same text written as prose and verse would be able to compare participants' attitudes toward the two. Given that the present study has shown that meaning is given a lot of importance in the reading of poetry, a study on whether the same occurs when teachers and students read novels and short stories would be worth pursuing. The findings of such research would help to indicate whether poetry is truly a 'special' case or whether all literature leads to the same approach within an academic context.

The study's data collection instruments enabled me to answer its research questions, however, with hindsight I would probably make a number of adjustments to the research design if I were to do the study all over again. One of the most significant and original instruments employed in this study was the stimulus material I asked all interviewees to respond to at the end of each semi-structured and focus group interview. Despite the fact that the poem I used yielded rich data that led me to form insights into the participants' attitudes, beliefs and practices, I could have piloted a variety of poems dealing with poetry education before opting for the right one. Moreover, this part of the interviews was relatively unstructured given that I merely asked the participants to reflect on whether the poem described their personal

---

[10] A small amount of research about attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to drama (Batho, 1998; Medina, 2004; Sæbø, 2009; Wales, 2009), fiction (Koch & Kendall, 2003; Maynard, MacKay, & Smyth, 2008; Sumara, Davis, & Iftody, 2006) and literature more broadly (Asselin, 2000; Bakker, 2008; Beach, 1985; Hayes, 2001; Jarvis, 2000; Morra & Guðbjörnsdóttir, 2009; Nash, 2007; Railton, 2015) has been published, but it has not necessarily explored the interplay between these three elements as occurs in the present study.

experiences of a poetry lesson. The follow up questions I asked were not drafted beforehand; if I had done this I might have generated a more focused discussion of the participants' experience of poetry education. A different approach to the use of poetry as a research instrument would have been to ask the participants to write a poem entitled 'A Poetry Lesson'. Fuller (2010) did something similar when she analysed a group of children's perspectives by means of their poems entitled 'An English Lesson'. I could also have used poetry as a means of interpreting and reflecting on the data, as Barrett (2011) did in her action research. Poetic inquiry carries 'within it the power to move its audience affectively as well as intellectually and will deal with the kinds of topics that lead into the affective experiential domain' (Prendergast, 2009, p. xxii). As a form of research it would have enabled me to investigate the participants' use of metaphors when talking about poetry education. My study yielded a very rich use of metaphors on the part of teachers, students and the examiner (see 4.3), but I chose not to go into detail in relation to this area given that it was somewhat tangential to my primary line of research. Further research building on Wilson's (2013) work is needed in order to better understand the use of metaphors in this field. Another instrument I used was the observation scheme and this yielded interesting data about the main poetry lesson events. However, given that the main component of this instrument consisted of a checklist, I was constrained to observing the series of categories predetermined by the checklist. In an extension of this study it would be important to combine structured observation with a narrative account. The latter would enable me to observe a poetry lesson's events unhindered by predetermined categories. Moreover, filming the observed sessions or using multiple observers rather than one would help to enhance the reliability of this instrument.

In the recommendations section above it is proposed that teacher education and development can play a crucial role in mitigating some of the problems highlighted by this study. However, research is required in order to form a better understanding of which specific teacher education and development practices and programmes can help implement the above recommendations. Moreover, teacher education and development is not a panacea for all the difficulties in the field of poetry education. A number of factors contribute to shaping teachers' and students' attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry and poetry pedagogy. Hence, studies on how the home and other social domains impinge on these attitudes, beliefs

and practices are also necessary. Such studies would explore the attitudes and beliefs of a variety of other stakeholders, including parents, policymakers, teacher educators, and poets. Despite the fact that the present study probed the views of a chief examiner and syllabus developer with respect to poetry education, further research is required in order to evaluate the influence of the attitudes and beliefs of such stakeholders on the practice of designing syllabi and examination papers. This would provide a more holistic perspective on poetry education.

6.5 Coda

This study's main contribution to advancing research on poetry education is the light it throws on the significance of the relationship between attitudes and beliefs on the one hand and practices on the other. It is widely reckoned that poetry education has 'this vast, magical potential…of awakening to the wonder of any experience, even when culturally denoted as trivial' (Stevens & McGuinn, 2004, p. 10). Unfortunately, this potential is not always fulfilled in the classroom. Rather than restricting itself to exploring the influence of examinations on poetry pedagogy, as is the case with much previous research, this study has helped to clarify the importance of shared attitudes and beliefs in determining the way teachers and students approach poetry. It demonstrates how fundamental it is for them and other stakeholders to develop an awareness of the effect of attitudes and beliefs. Its findings lead to a better understanding of the complexity of the events that occur in the black box of the poetry classroom and beyond, events that are orchestrated by teachers and students both consciously and not.

Attitudes, Beliefs and Practices in Poetry Education at a Post-secondary School in Malta

Volume 2 of 2

Daniel Xerri

B.A. (Hons), P.G.C.E., M.A., M.Ed.

Ph.D.

University of York

Education

December 2015

Table of Contents

Volume 2

Appendix 1 – Grouping of Subjects Forming Part of the Matriculation Certificate and Points Assigned to each Grade

Subjects forming part of the Matriculation Certificate are grouped into four categories: Group 1 (Languages), Group 2 (Humanities or Business subjects), Group 3 (Sciences), Group 4 (Art, Computing and other subjects). Students need to choose a subject from each one of the first three groups, any other two subjects from the four groups and Systems of Knowledge, which is a compulsory subject and rated as an Intermediate level. All subjects are graded from A to E. Candidates are awarded grade F if they fail an examination. Each grade is assigned a number of points and candidates need to obtain passes in one subject from each of Groups 1, 2 and 3, in Systems of Knowledge, and obtain at least 44 grade points in order to be awarded the Matriculation Certificate. At Advanced level, Grade A is awarded 30 points, Grade B 24 points, Grade C 18 points, Grade D 12 points, and Grade E 6 points. At Intermediate level, Grade A is awarded 10 points, Grade B 8 points, Grade C 6 points, Grade D 4 points, and Grade E 2 points. Candidates sit for their examinations in May or September. The Certificate is awarded an overall grade (A, B or C) and this is determined from the sum of the grade points obtained in each subject: Grade A (80-100 points); Grade B (64-78 points); Grade C (44-62 points).

Appendix 2 – Matriculation Certificate English Syllabus (2013)

ENGLISH   **AM 10**

SYLLABUS

English AM 10	(Available in September)
Syllabus	Paper 1(3 hrs)+Paper II (3 hrs)+Paper III(3 hrs)+(Oral 15 mins)

Term of the Syllabus

This Syllabus for Matsec Advanced Level English (AM English) is valid for the May 2013 and September 2013 sessions and later.

Aims

A course based on this Syllabus should enable the following to be achieved:

- competence in handling the English language accurately, with minimal errors in grammar and spelling;
- the ability to communicate ideas effectively and through coherent logic and structure in expression and argumentation;
- a knowledge of various aspects and variations of English style, and the ability to apply this knowledge to good effect and ideally with some evidence of stylishness and flair in one's own writing;
- repertoires of reading across a range of texts in English, both literary and non-literary;
- an introductory knowledge of tools for the critical analysis of literary and non-literary language;
- knowledge, mediated through introductory aspects of language study and linguistics, of the different structures, constituents and applications of the English language, in both its written and spoken forms;
- an understanding of the way in which writers use language, form, structure and rhetoric to shape and contribute to meaning;
- an understanding of the ways in which readers respond to, interpret and value texts;
- the development of critical sense in regard to different kinds of texts;
- the development of an ability for personal response to texts and the exercising of independent judgement in their analysis;
- the ability to respond to, describe, explain and comment on language;
- the ability to understand different forms and genres of written English in terms of ideas, intention, expression and appropriateness;
- the enjoyment and appreciation, in a disciplined and critical way, of literary and non-literary texts;
- adaptability across different tasks and purposes in the interpretation and expression of English.

Assessment Objectives

The examination will assess a candidate's ability to:

- write lucidly, fluently and accurately on of a number of subjects;
- use appropriate vocabulary and style;
- summarise or adapt material for a given purpose;
- demonstrate flexibility and adaptability in using studied material;
- demonstrate understanding of the content and purpose of previously unseen material, drawn from a wide variety of sources;
- respond with understanding to texts of different types and periods;
- understand the ways in which writers' choices of language, form, structure and rhetoric help to express meaning, outlook, attitude and tone;
- demonstrate knowledge of the contexts in which literary works are written and received;
- produce informed, independent and critical opinions and judgements;
- communicate clearly the knowledge, understanding and insight appropriate to literary studies;
- show understanding of some of the key constituents of language at word, clause, sentence and text level;
- show understanding of how meanings and forms in language are influenced by variations in mode and context, including personal, cultural and social factors.

2

Composition of the Examination and Subject Content

The English Advanced Examination is made up of three papers and an oral examination, as follows:

Paper I (33.3% of global mark; 3 hours; one question to be chosen from each section)
> Section A: Shakespeare (Involves the study of set texts, to answer on one play; see below).
> Section B: Poetry (Involves the study of set texts, to answer on one poet; see below).
> Section C: Literary Criticism : Poetry (based on an unseen text)

Paper II (33.3% of global mark; 3 hours; two questions to be chosen from Section A and one from Section B))
> Section A: Novel (Involves the study of set texts, to answer two questions on two different novels).
> Section B: Literary Criticism: Prose (based on an unseen extract)

Paper III (27.3% of global mark; 2 hours and 45 minutes; one question to be chosen from each section)
> Section A: Language Essay
> Section B: Summary
> Section C: Linguistics

Oral (6%; 15 minutes)

Shakespeare

One question is to be answered. There will be two essay-type questions and one passage-based question on each of the following Shakespeare plays.
Julius Caesar
The Tempest
Othello
The recommended edition in each case is that to be found within the *Oxford School Shakespeare* series (but see also the note on this in the 'Appendix: Notes to Students and Teachers').

The passage-based question will require candidates to identify the context of the text and to relate the text to wider concerns (involving one or more issue relating to theme, imagery, characterisation, setting, time and action) within the play as a whole.

All questions require candidates to identify the major themes and issues explored within the play which they have studied; identify and examine a range of devices employed by Shakespeare (for example, language and imagery), exploring how these methods shape meaning; produce informed, independent opinions and critical judgements on the text studied; and communicate clearly the knowledge, understanding and insight appropriate to literary study.

Answers in this section must not be shorter than 400 words.

Poetry

One question is to be answered. There will be two essay-type questions on each of the collections set. The prescribed poems are the following:

John Keats: 'Lamia'; 'The Eve of St. Agnes'; 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci'; 'Bright Star! Would I Were Steadfast As Thou Art'; 'When I Have Fears That I May Cease To Be'; 'On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer'; 'Ode to a Nightingale'; 'Ode to Autumn'; 'Ode to a Grecian Urn'; 'On Sitting Down to Reading Lear Again'. Students should also read the following letters: 'Vale of Soul Making' – Letter to George and Georgiana Keats, 21 April 1819; 'Chamber of Maiden Thoughts' – Letter to John Hamilton Reynolds, 3 May 1818; 'Negative Capability/Intensity' – Letter to his brothers, 21 December 1817; 'Chameleon Poet' – Letter to George and Georgiana Keats, 3 May 1819.
   The poem 'On Sitting Down to Reading Lear Again', together with the Letters indicated, have been added to the Syllabus. 'Isabella' has been removed.
 (A recommended text is *Bright Star: The Complete Poems and Selected Letters of John Keats* (Vintage, 2009), but other reliable texts by editors like Robert Gittings or John Barnard are acceptable.)

Wilfred Owen: 'Anthem for Doomed Youth'; 'S.I.W.'; 'Apologia pro Poemate Meo'; 'Futility'; 'Strange Meeting'; 'The Send-Off'; 'The Show'; 'The Chances'; 'Exposure'; 'Inspection'; 'At a Calvary near the Ancre'; 'The Dead-Beat'; 'Disabled'; 'Dulce et Decorum Est'; 'Greater Love'; 'Le Christianisme'; 'Mental Cases'; 'The Parable of the Old Man and the Young'; 'The Sentry'; 'Spring Offensive'. Students should also read 'Preface'.

   The poems *Asleep; A Terre; Conscious; Insensibility; The Last Laugh; Smile, Smile, Smile; Miners; The Next War* are no longer in the syllabus.
(The recommended text is Wilfred Owen, *The War Poems*, ed. Jon Stallworthy (Chatto & Windus, 1994)).

Emily Dickinson: 'I have never seen 'Volcanoes'; 'An awful tempest mashed the air'; 'I felt a Funeral, in my Brain'; 'A Clock stopped'; 'The soul selects her own society'; 'He scrambles at your soul'; 'After great pain, a formal feeling comes'; 'I dreaded that first Robin, so'; 'I heard a Fly Buzz – when I died'; 'This World is not Conclusion'; 'The Soul has Bandaged moments'; 'I tried to think a lonelier thing'; 'One need not be a chamber – to be haunted'; 'Because I could not stop for Death'; 'My Life has stood – a Loaded Gun'; 'The Loneliness one dare not sound'; 'Of Consciousness her awful Mate'; 'Drowning is not so pitiful'; 'One crucifixion is recorded – only'; 'Four can do all but raise the Dead'.
(The recommended text is *Emily Dicksinson*, ed. Ted Hughes, (Faber and Faber, 2004), but other texts, like the Thomas A. Johnson edition published by Little Brown, are acceptable).

All questions require candidates to articulate informed and relevant responses that communicate effectively their knowledge and understanding of poetry; analyse the poet's use of such poetic devices as form, versification, diction, imagery, rhetoric, style and tone; demonstrate detailed critical understanding in analysing the ways in which structure, form and language shape meaning; produce informed, independent opinions and critical judgements on the text studied; and communicate clearly the knowledge, understanding and insight appropriate to literary study.

Answers in this question must not be shorter than 400 words.

Novel

Two questions are to be answered on two different novels. There will be one essay-type question and one passage-based question on each of the following novels:

Margaret Atwood: *The Handmaid's Tale*
Jane Austen: *Emma*
Charles Dickens: *Great Expectations*
Graham Greene: *The Heart of the Matter*
Ian McEwan: *Atonement*
Evelyn Waugh: *A Handful of Dust*

All questions require candidates to identify the major themes and issues explored within the novel which they have studied; identify and examine a range of narrative devices employed by the author (for example, characterisation, plotting, imagery) exploring how these methods shape meaning; produce informed, independent and critical opinions on the text studied and communicate clearly the knowledge, understanding and insight appropriate to literary study.

In the case of passage-based questions, candidates will be expected to place the extract within its context and discuss its significance to the narrative. They may be asked to explore the thematic implications of the extract, highlighting pertinent links with the rest of the novel while possibly being required also to comment on imagery, characterisation, setting and time. Candidates are reminded that answers to the gobbet question should be firmly anchored in analysis of the extract and consequently they should refrain from regarding this question as a prompt to say all they know about the novel. Thus, while encouraged to make connections with other parts of the text, these must be fully relevant to the extract in question.

Answers in this section must not be shorter than 400 words.

4

Literary Criticism

There are two unseen passages for critical commentary in the English AM Syllabus: a poetry passage in Paper I Section C, and a prose passage in Paper II Section B. In each case, examiners will be looking for appreciation as much as critique, as at this level what is looked for as much as anything is ability in the recognition and savouring of literary effect and of striking and stylish use of language. Indeed, one purpose of these passages is to allow students the opportunity to demonstrate sensitiveness to both the distinction and distinctiveness of literary language and effects. Students will also be expected to show awareness of the differences between poetry and literary prose, and to write about both in a manner that indicates familiarity with the tools of critical analysis, particularly in the identification and commentary of rhetorical devices and the use of critical terms and idiom. The unseen texts will need to be analysed in terms of aspects of theme, form, imagery, rhetoric, style and tone (though students will not be expected to write about *all* of these in one essay: on this point, see the paragraph on the rubric for the questions in these sections, below). Students will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the aspects of the texts that are uncommon or singular. In poetry, an ability to comment on versification will further inform the assessment criteria, though distinctions between, for instance, iambic and trochaic structures in poetic lines will not be considered, at this level, a *sine qua non* of the literary criticism essay.

The prose passage will typically be chosen from a fictional text from the nineteenth century or later, and will not be longer than 600 words. Passages will be selected with a view to minimising cultural specificity. However, few passages can be absolutely free of certain contextual cues, and students should therefore not be alarmed to encounter one or two references to unfamiliar contexts in place and time, as marks will not be deducted in the case of those cues not being recognised.

The poem may be chosen from a broader range within literary history, but will not be one that is wilfully enigmatic or obscure, as the focus will be on candidates' ability to identify and appreciate poetic devices rather than to engage with anything that at this level might come across as cryptic. However, candidates may expect to exercise some interpretative skill in their commentary on the poem.

The wording of the rubric associated with the prose passage may follow this model, which is being given here for the guidance of students and teachers:

> In this exercise of practical criticism, you are asked to write an appreciation of the passage below. You may wish to keep in mind some of the following considerations in your answer, and may also comment on any other aspect of the passage that you consider to be worthy of discussion.
>> theme and motifs;
>> pattern and form;
>> character and personality;
>> drama and crisis;
>> imagery and rhetoric;
>> style and tone;
>> place, time and mood;
>> idiom and register.

The wording of the rubric associated with the unseen poem may follow this model:

> In this exercise of practical criticism, you are asked to write an appreciation of the poem below. You may wish to keep in mind some of the following considerations in your answer, and may also comment on any other aspect of the poem that you consider to be worthy of discussion.
>> theme and motifs;
>> form and structure;
>> imagery and rhetoric;
>> rhyme and metre;
>> style and tone;
>> place, time and mood.

Language Essay

The Language Essay provides an opportunity for candidates to write on a chosen topic employing an appropriate style. Candidates can draw on their own experiences and ideas, showing awareness of different forms of written and spoken expression and of the demands of a particular purpose or audience. Thought and discussion about current and philosophical issues, evaluation of experience and the exploration and practice of different kinds of creative writing will prepare candidates for this exercise. Candidates will be expected to write an essay of not less than 500 words, the title being chosen from a list of eight which will include examples of argumentative, narrative and descriptive essays.

Summary

The purpose of the summary is to give a condensed and objective account of the main ideas and features of the assigned text. A good summary should reflect, in different words as far as possible, the most salient parts of the original text as well as aspects such as bias and purpose. It is desirable that the course enable learners to further develop summarising skills through practice that includes intensive reading of texts, a better understanding of the meanings and functions of assigned texts and the writing of actual summary exercises at class or at home.

Candidates will be expected to write a summary of between 150 and 200 words from an original non-literary text of not more than 600 words, demonstrating understanding of the original text or part thereof and their ability to restate its main purpose.

Linguistics

This component provides an introductory experience of some aspects of Linguistics aimed at enabling candidates to deepen their interest and enjoyment in the use of English while introducing them to the concepts and methods of linguistic study in relation to spoken and written forms. The course provides understanding and practice that is gauged in range and depth as to contribute to the candidate's own attainment of the overall aims of this syllabus.

Candidates should be prepared for this component through Alan Gardiner, *English AS & A2* (Pearson, 2008)

Topics to be covered are: Word Classes, Phrases, Sentence Types, Cohesion, Morphology, Semantics, Difference between Speech and Writing, Non-Literary texts, Literary texts, Dialects, Sociolects, Idiolects, SE and RP, Register, Sexism, Political Correctness, Taboo.

There will be three questions from which candidates will be required to answer one. The questions may be essay type questions and/or task based.

Oral

It is desirable that candidates studying English at Advanced level demonstrate an evolved proficiency in speaking and listening skills. The Oral component serves as a measure of the candidates' ability to speak and converse in English, and will follow a structured approach in a one-to-one setting involving the examiner and the candidate. The session will follow a three-part structure that includes:

1. An informal interview intended as a conversation starter, where the examiner will ask basic questions about topics such as work, study, leisure and career plans.
2. A conversation initiated by the interlocutor, based on a prompt such as a photograph or other image that is presented to the candidate at this point in the interview.
3. A presentation expressed as a long turn by the candidate based on a question selected by the candidate from a list of five presented to her/him some minutes before entering the interview room. The set of five questions will reflect five of the following topics: lifestyle, music, sport, religion, relationships, international news, environment, war, education and entertainment.

Hence:

Part 1 is a guided examiner-to-candidate conversation (about 3 minutes – 3 marks).
Part 2 is a guided examiner-to-candidate conversation (about 4 minutes – 6 marks).

6

253

Part 3 is a candidate-to-examiner 'long turn' (about 3 minutes – 9 marks).

On this point, and as this is the first time that a component involving Spoken English is being included in the AM English syllabus, students and teachers may wish to refer to Appendix 2 below, which sets out further information on this aspect of the examination.

Appendix 1: Notes to Students and Teachers

Pre-requisites and Validity
The Syllabus assumes knowledge of English Language at SEC Level (or equivalent). English Literature at SEC Level (or equivalent familiarity with close study of texts) , while not an obligatory requirement, is recommended, as experience has shown that it helps students acquire a readier competence in the literature-related components of the Syllabus.

Quality of Language in Student Answers
It cannot be sufficiently emphasised that candidates will be assessed on their ability to organise and present information, ideas, descriptions and arguments *clearly and logically*, taking into account *accuracy* in their use of grammar, punctuation and spelling. In *all* questions across *all* papers, marks awarded will take into account the quality of the language used by the candidate.

Use of Prepared Material
The examiners recognise that students will seek to make use of prepared material in their answers, and that teachers invest significant effort in helping students put together such material, which may be derived from lecture and study notes, model essays, critical material, etc. However, it must be stressed that there are significant risks in the use of rehearsed material that fails to reflect and adapt itself to the specificities of the essay questions set in the examination. Students are therefore strongly urged not to reproduce memorised essays which may have scant bearing upon the question asked, and to make an effort to adapt their study and their prepared material, as needed, in their answers. Failure to do so too often results in answers that are 'out of point'.

Specimen Paper
A specimen paper for this syllabus shall be available at http://www.um.edu.mt/matsec

Grade Descriptors
A detailed schedule of grade descriptors, setting out the percentage range of marks within each grade, is available at the Matsec English Advanced and Intermediate Level Resources Website, at http://www.um.edu.mt/matsec
Teachers are advised to mark tutorial essays in a manner that reflects this schedule, as it will help to achieve consistency between what happens within schools and colleges on the one hand and marking practice within the Advanced Level examination on the other.

AM English Resources and Item Bank
The Syllabus Panel will be making available at the following website a Resources and Item Bank:
http://www.um.edu.mt/matsec.   The Bank will be coordinated by a Moderator who, in consultation with the Panel, will on a periodical basis edit and upload for use in the Advanced Level English classroom a selective range of resources, specimen questions, model essays, etc.

Recommended Editions in Shakespeare, Poetry, Novel
Although the Syllabus does recommend specific editions, these are not binding in any way and teachers and students may use other editions. Hence, for instance, in teaching Shakespeare teachers may wish to refer to the scholarly apparatus available in the Arden editions, while in the teaching of poetry and the novels there are advantages to be had in reference being made to different critical introductions. Both teachers and students can be reassured, however, that examination answers will not required to be faithful to any one edition of any text.

Literary Criticism

Experience has shown that teachers tend to select their own material in lecture preparation for this component of the course. This has worked well in the past and continues to be encouraged, but teachers who may wish to consult published material may consult Steven Croft and Helen Cross, *Literature, Criticism and Style*, 2nd rev. edn (Oxford University Press, 2001), Steven Croft, *Success in English Literature: A Practical Guide to Working with Unseen Texts at Advanced Level* (Oxford University Press, 2000), or similar guides.

Summary

As with passages for literary criticism, experience has shown that teachers tend to select their own material in lecture preparation for this component of the course and this has led to good results in the past. However, teachers who may wish to consult published material for this component may refer to texts like the following:

Linguistics

Apart from using the recommended Alan Gardiner text in the classroom, teachers are advised to use Victor Fromkin, Robert Rodman and Nina Hyams, *An Introduction to Language*, 8th International Edition (Heinle, 2006) as a resource text to supplement their lecture preparation.

Reference to Literary Critics, Theorists, Linguists

Reference to literary critics and theorists does not make up part of the assessment criteria at Advanced Level. Familiarity with, for instance, feminism, New Historicism, postcolonialism, poststructuralism or the finer points of narratology is certainly not expected. In other words, it remains possible at this level, as long as other good aspects in students' writing are in evidence, to score high marks in essays that do not refer to such approaches or to the figures that deploy them. However, the examiners may choose to award evidence of broader reading within an author's work or across critique of that author, as well as reference to critics and theorists if these are discerningly and appropriately (rather than tokenistically) used.

By the same token, reference to authorities in the field of Linguistics is not expected at Advanced Level—not unless their work is specifically covered in the Linguistics component of the course. As with Literary Criticism, however, examiners may exercise their discernment and discretion in rewarding appropriate and productive reference that might be considered to enhance a student answer.

Recommended Usage

The following usage is recommended, though marks will not be forfeited if students use, where applicable, correct alternatives:

- possessives for words ending in *s* should be written as *'s*, hence *Keats's* or *Dickens's*.
- *–ise* is preferred to *–ize*.
- Pluralised forms of date ranges should not use the apostrophe, hence *1930s*, *1800s*.
- Single quotation marks should be placed around cited material in in-text citations, hence 'For Brutus is an honourable man …'. Longer quotations should be indented and set off from the main text of the essay, in which case quotation marks are not necessary.
- Titles of individual poems should be given within single quotation marks; titles of novels or plays or linguistics and other book-length texts should be underlined.

Appendix 2: Further Information on the Oral Component in AM English

Part 1 is a guided examiner to candidate conversation (about 3 minutes – 4 marks).
This will be an informal interview intended to function as a conversation starter where the examiner will ask basic questions about topics such as home town, family, work, study, leisure and future plans.

For example, the examiner may select from:
1. What is the name of your home town or village?
2. Where is it located?
3. Can you tell me something about it?
4. Which is the most interesting part of the town/village?
5. Has your family – have your parents/grandparents – always lived there?
6. Is there anything you particularly like or do not like about it?
7. Do you like living there? Can you explain why?
8. Can you tell me one thing you would like to see improved in your town/village?

Just for the purpose of extending the conversation; the examiner may choose to introduce a spontaneous follow-up to the candidate's response so that the exchange becomes a four-part exchange.

Ex	Where is it located?	*Initiation*
C	North of the island.	*Response*
Ex	Is it an inland town?	*Follow-up*
C	No. It is a coastal fishing village.	*Response*

Part 2 is a guided examiner to candidate conversation (about 4 minutes – 6 marks).
This will be a conversation initiated by the examiner based on a prompt such as a photograph that is presented to the candidate at this point in the interview.

The examiner will start by asking the candidate to briefly describe the picture.
The examiner will then follow one set of questions from a number of options available. For example, the conversation based on the picture above may eventually focus on one of the following:
1. The elderly in society
2. Music
3. Memorabilia
4. Times gone by

9

As in Part 1, and just for the purpose of extending the conversation, the examiner may choose to introduce a follow-up to the candidate's response so that the exchange becomes a four-part exchange.

Part 3 is a candidate to examiner monologue.   (about 3 minutes – 8 marks).
This will be a presentation expressed as a 'long turn' by the candidate. It is based on a title/question selected by the candidate from a list of five presented to her/him some minutes before entering the interview room. For example:

1.   The importance of friends in teenage years.
2.   My relationship with food.
3.   What motivates students in the classroom?
4.   What is your opinion about the way the press tends to hound celebrities for photographs and gossip?
5.   The beauty and power of music is that it can be a social as well as a personal, spiritual experience.

Should there be the need, the examiner may intervene through a question, clarification or cue to help the candidate maintain the discourse. The examiner will not intervene to challenge the candidate or reroute the candidate's intended course.

Appendix 3 – Informed Consent Form: Student Questionnaire

Department of English

University of Malta Junior College

Ġuze Debono Square

Msida, MSD1252

Malta

Dear Student,

Informed Consent

I am currently conducting doctoral research at the Department of Education, University of York. The purpose of my research is to investigate attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry education at Junior College.

I would be grateful if you would consent to participate in my study by completing the attached questionnaire. Participation is strictly on a voluntary basis.

Your participation in the study will be kept confidential and you do not need to include your name and surname on the questionnaire. Please rest assured that your identity will remain anonymous and that the data collected in the study will be used for research purposes only. You will have an opportunity to read the thesis once this is completed.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign and date this consent form. Please note that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and you do not have to give a reason for doing so. Should you need to contact me, my email address is dx509@york.ac.uk

I thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Daniel Xerri

I have understood the purpose of Mr Xerri's research and I agree to participate in his study. I am fully aware that my personal details will be kept confidential and that my contribution will be used for research purposes only.

_____   _____

Name in Block Letters   Signature

_____

Date

Appendix 4 – Informed Consent Form: Classroom Observation

Department of English

University of Malta Junior College

Ġuze Debono Square

Msida, MSD1252

Malta

Dear Colleague,

Informed Consent

I am currently conducting doctoral research at the Department of Education, University of York. The purpose of my research is to investigate attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry education at Junior College.

I would be grateful if you would consent to participate in my study by being observed delivering a poetry lesson. Participation is on a voluntary basis. In order to observe your lesson I will be using an observation scheme consisting of a lesson pro forma, events checklist, rating scale and written notes.

Your participation in the study will be kept strictly confidential. Your name and surname and any other identifying details will not be mentioned in the thesis and any publications. Please rest assured that your identity will remain anonymous and that the data collected in the study will be used for research purposes only.

You will have an opportunity to check the completed observation scheme before it is used in the study and suggest changes or deletions. You will also have an opportunity to read the thesis once this is completed.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign and date this consent form. Please note that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and you do not have to give a reason for doing so. Should you need to contact me, my email address is dx509@york.ac.uk

I thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Daniel Xerri

I have understood the purpose of Mr Xerri's research and I agree to participate in his study. I am fully aware that my personal details will be kept confidential and that my contribution will be used for research purposes only.

_____   _____

Name in Block Letters   Signature

_____

Date

Appendix 5 – Informed Consent Form: Teacher Semi-structured Interview

Department of English

University of Malta Junior College

Ġuze Debono Square

Msida, MSD1252

Malta

Dear Colleague,

Informed Consent

I am currently conducting doctoral research at the Department of Education, University of York. The purpose of my research is to investigate attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry education at Junior College.

I would be grateful if you would consent to participate in my study by sitting for a one-to-one interview. Participation is on a voluntary basis. The interview will be approximately 45 minutes long. It will be audio recorded and transcribed.

Your participation in the study will be kept strictly confidential. Your name and surname and any other identifying details will not be mentioned in the course of the interview or included in the transcript, thesis and any publications. Please rest assured that your identity will remain anonymous and that the data collected in the study will be used for research purposes only.

You will have an opportunity to read the interview transcript before it is used in the study and suggest changes or deletions. The recording of the interview will be destroyed upon completion of the study. You will also have an opportunity to read the thesis once this is completed.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign and date this consent form. Please note that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and you do not

have to give a reason for doing so. Should you need to contact me, my email address is dx509@york.ac.uk

I thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Daniel Xerri

I have understood the purpose of Mr Xerri's research and I agree to participate in his study. I am fully aware that my personal details will be kept confidential and that my contribution will be used for research purposes only.

_____   _____

Name in Block Letters   Signature

_____

Date

Appendix 6 – Informed Consent Form: Chief Examiner Semi-structured Interview

Department of English

University of Malta Junior College

Ġuze Debono Square

Msida, MSD1252

Malta

Dear XXXX,

Informed Consent

I am currently conducting doctoral research at the Department of Education, University of York. The purpose of my research is to investigate attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry education at Junior College.

I would be grateful if you would consent to participate in my study by sitting for a one-to-one interview. Participation is on a voluntary basis. The interview will be approximately 45 minutes long. It will be audio recorded and transcribed.

Your participation in the study will be kept strictly confidential. Your name and surname and any other identifying details will not be mentioned in the course of the interview or included in the transcript, thesis and any publications. Please rest assured that your identity will remain anonymous and that the data collected in the study will be used for research purposes only.

You will have an opportunity to read the interview transcript before it is used in the study and suggest changes or deletions. The recording of the interview will be destroyed upon completion of the study. You will also have an opportunity to read the thesis once this is completed.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign and date this consent form. Please note that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and you do not

have to give a reason for doing so. Should you need to contact me, my email address is dx509@york.ac.uk

I thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Daniel Xerri

I have understood the purpose of Mr Xerri's research and I agree to participate in his study. I am fully aware that my personal details will be kept confidential and that my contribution will be used for research purposes only.

_____   _____
Name in Block Letters   Signature

_____
Date

Appendix 7 – Informed Consent Form: Student Semi-structured Interview

Department of English

University of Malta Junior College

Ġuze Debono Square

Msida, MSD1252

Malta

Dear Student,

Informed Consent

I am currently conducting doctoral research at the Department of Education, University of York. The purpose of my research is to investigate attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry education at Junior College.

I would be grateful if you would consent to participate in my study by sitting for a one-to-one interview. Participation is on a voluntary basis. The interview will be approximately 45 minutes long. It will be audio recorded and transcribed.

Your participation in the study will be kept strictly confidential. Your name and surname and any other identifying details will not be mentioned in the course of the interview or included in the transcript, thesis and any publications. Please rest assured that your identity will remain anonymous and that the data collected in the study will be used for research purposes only.

You will have an opportunity to read the interview transcript before it is used in the study and suggest changes or deletions. The recording of the interview will be destroyed upon completion of the study. You will also have an opportunity to read the thesis once this is completed.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign and date this consent form. Please note that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and you do not

have to give a reason for doing so. Should you need to contact me, my email address is dx509@york.ac.uk

I thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Daniel Xerri

I have understood the purpose of Mr Xerri's research and I agree to participate in his study. I am fully aware that my personal details will be kept confidential and that my contribution will be used for research purposes only.

_____ _____
Name in Block Letters   Signature

_____
Date

Appendix 8 – Informed Consent Form: Student Focus Group Interview

Department of English

University of Malta Junior College

Ġuze Debono Square

Msida, MSD1252

Malta

Dear Student,

Informed Consent

I am currently conducting doctoral research at the Department of Education, University of York. The purpose of my research is to investigate attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry education at Junior College.

I would be grateful if you would consent to participate in my study by sitting for a focus group interview. Participation is on a voluntary basis. The interview will be approximately 30 minutes long. It will be audio recorded and transcribed.

Your participation in the study will be kept strictly confidential. Your name and surname and any other identifying details will not be mentioned in the course of the interview or included in the transcript, thesis and any publications. Please rest assured that your identity will remain anonymous and that the data collected in the study will be used for research purposes only.

You will have an opportunity to read the interview transcript before it is used in the study and suggest changes or deletions. The recording of the interview will be destroyed upon completion of the study. You will also have an opportunity to read the thesis once this is completed.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign and date this consent form. Please note that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and you do not

have to give a reason for doing so. Should you need to contact me, my email address is dx509@york.ac.uk

I thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Daniel Xerri

I have understood the purpose of Mr Xerri's research and I agree to participate in his study. I am fully aware that my personal details will be kept confidential and that my contribution will be used for research purposes only.

_____   _____
Name in Block Letters   Signature

_____
Date

Appendix 9 – Informed Consent Form: Student Written Response

Department of English

University of Malta Junior College

Ġuze Debono Square

Msida, MSD1252

Malta

Dear Student,

Informed Consent

I am currently carrying out doctoral research at the Department of Education, University of York. The purpose of my research is to investigate attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to poetry education at Junior College.

I would be grateful if you would consent to participate in my study by providing a written response on Billy Collins's 'Introduction to Poetry'. Participation is on a voluntary basis.

Your participation in the study will be kept strictly confidential. Your name and surname and any other identifying details will not be mentioned in the thesis and any publications. Please rest assured that your identity will remain anonymous and that the data collected in the study will be used for research purposes only.

You will have an opportunity to read the thesis once this is completed.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign and date this consent form. Please note that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and you do not have to give a reason for doing so. Should you need to contact me, my email address is dx509@york.ac.uk

I thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Daniel Xerri

I have understood the purpose of Mr Xerri's research and I agree to participate in his study. I am fully aware that my personal details will be kept confidential and that my contribution will be used for research purposes only.

_____   _____
Name in Block Letters   Signature

_____
Date

Appendix 10 – Student Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to complete the following questionnaire. Rest assured that confidentiality is guaranteed and that the data will be used for research purposes only. Please note that all the instructions on how to answer the questions are in parentheses and italicised.

1. Male/Female *(Please delete as appropriate.)*

2. Please rank the following reading materials in terms of the ones you read mostly in English:
   (Rank from 1 to 9. 1=Read most; 9=Read least.)

	a) Magazines		f) Drama
	b) Websites		g) Newspapers
	c) Novels		h) Comics
	d) Non-fiction books		i) Social networking sites
	e) Poetry		j) Other: _____

3. Please rank the following syllabus components in terms of enjoyment:
   (Rank from 1 to 9. 1=Enjoy Most; 9=Enjoy Least.)

	a) Shakespeare's *Othello*		f) Literary Criticism: prose (unseen)
	b) Wilfred Owen's poetry		g) Language Essay
	c) Literary Criticism: poetry (unseen)		h) Comprehension and Summary
	d) Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*		i) Linguistics
	e) Greene's *The Heart of the Matter*		

4. Please rank the following syllabus components in terms of difficulty:
   (Rank from 1 to 9. 1=Most Difficult; 9=Least Difficult.)

	a) Shakespeare's *Othello*		f) Literary Criticism: prose (unseen)
	b) Wilfred Owen's poetry		g) Language Essay
	c) Literary Criticism: poetry (unseen)		h) Comprehension and Summary
	d) Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*		i) Linguistics
	e) Greene's *The Heart of the Matter*		

5. What do you understand by the term 'poetry'?

Poetry is…

_____

_____

6. How often do you read poetry for pleasure? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Never
	b) Rarely
	c) Sometimes
	d) Frequently

7. Have you ever attended an event at which you listened to a poet reading his or her work in English?

	a) Yes
	b) No

8. Would you like the English Department at Junior College to organise poetry readings in the future?

	a) Yes	*(Please give a reason for your answer in this box.)*
	b) No	

9. A poetry slam is a competition in which people perform their work and the audience decides on the winner. Have you ever attended such an event?

	a) Yes
	b) No

10. Would you like the English Department at Junior College to organise poetry slams in the future?

	a) Yes	*(Please give a reason for your answer in this box.)*
	b) No	

11. *(Please tick only one option per statement.)*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) I enjoy reading poetry.				
b) I enjoy studying poetry.				
c) I enjoy writing poetry.				
d) I enjoy watching videos of people reading poetry.				
e) Poetry is important.				
f) If poetry weren't part of the syllabus I would still				

read poetry.				
g) I will continue reading poetry once I finish my studies.				
h) I would like to be given the opportunity to write poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus.				
i) I enjoy reading song lyrics.				
j) I enjoy writing song lyrics.				

12. Do you like Wilfred Owen's poems? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) None of them
	b) Some of them
	c) Most of them
	d) All of them

13. Do you like the poems you read during your literary criticism seminars? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) None of them
	b) Some of them
	c) Most of them
	d) All of them

14. Do you like the poems you are asked to write about for your literary criticism tutorials? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) None of them		c) Most of them
	b) Some of them		d) All of them

15. How often does your teacher encourage you and your classmates to suggest poems to discuss during your literary criticism seminars? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Never
	b) Rarely
	c) Sometimes
	d) Frequently

(If in question 15 you chose option a) please answer question 16. If you chose options b), c) or d) please skip question 16 and go directly to question 17.)

16. Would you like to be given the opportunity to suggest poems that you and your classmates can discuss during your literary criticism seminars?

	a) Yes	*(Please give a reason for your answer in this box.)*
	b) No	

17. How useful is your teacher's method when teaching Wilfred Owen's poetry? *(Please circle only one option. 1=Very useful; 5=Not useful)*

Very useful				Not useful
1	2	3	4	5

18. How useful is your teacher's method when teaching the literary criticism of poetry? *(Please circle only one option. 1=Very useful; 5=Not useful)*

Very useful				Not useful
1	2	3	4	5

19. How useful is your teacher's method when conducting a poetry tutorial? *(Please circle only one option. 1=Very useful; 5=Not useful)*

Very useful				Not useful
1	2	3	4	5

20. Do you enjoy your lectures on Wilfred Owen's poetry? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Yes
	b) No
	c) Sometimes

21. Do you enjoy your literary criticism poetry seminars? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Yes
	b) No
	c) Sometimes

22. Do you enjoy your poetry tutorials? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Yes
	b) No
	c) Sometimes

23. Are you satisfied with what you do during your lectures on Wilfred Owen's poetry? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Very satisfied	*(Please give a reason for your answer in this box.)*
	b) Satisfied	
	c) Unsatisfied	
	d) Very unsatisfied	

24. Are you satisfied with what you do during your literary criticism poetry seminars? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Very satisfied	*(Please give a reason for your answer in this box.)*
	b) Satisfied	
	c) Unsatisfied	
	d) Very unsatisfied	

25. Are you satisfied with what you do during your poetry tutorials? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Very satisfied	*(Please give a reason for your answer in this box.)*
	b) Satisfied	
	c) Unsatisfied	
	d) Very unsatisfied	

26. Are there any changes that you would like to see in your lectures on Wilfred Owen?

	a) Yes	*(Please give a reason for your answer in this box.)*
	b) No	

27. Are there any changes that you would like to see in your literary criticism poetry seminars?

	a) Yes	*(Please give a reason for your answer in this box.)*
	b) No	

28. Are there any changes that you would like to see in your poetry tutorials?

	a) Yes	*(Please give a reason for your answer in this box.)*
	b) No	

29. Please complete the following sentence: A good teacher of poetry …

_____

_____

Appendix 11 – Observation Scheme

A. Information on the session being observed

Teacher:	Teaching experience in years:	Teaching qualification:
Date & Time:	Type of session:	Place of session in teaching sequence:
Year:	Course unit:	Topic/Focus:
Number of students:	Number of Boys:	Number of Girls:

B. Class layout

C. Events checklist

Teacher Behaviour	
Activity	**Descriptor**
1. Explains	Teacher passes on facts, opinions, ideas and new information about poem/poetry to students.
2. Open question	Teacher invites more than one answer to a question.
3. Closed question	Teacher invites a single response or facts.
4. Responds	Teacher responds to student's question about poem/poetry.
5. Reads aloud	Teacher reads poem aloud to the class.
6. Diagnostic follow-up	Teacher provides follow-up that explains why an answer/suggestion/comment is appropriate or not.
7. Writes notes on the board	Teacher writes explanatory notes about poem/poetry on the board.
8. Invites pair discussion	Teacher invites students to discuss poem/poetry in pairs but not to write.
9. Invites small group discussion	Teacher invites students to discuss poem/poetry in small groups but not to write.
10. Encourages poetry writing	Teacher encourages students to write poetry individually or collaboratively.
11. Encourages writing about poetry	Teacher encourages students to write literary criticism about poetry individually or collaboratively.
12. Invites reading aloud	Teacher invites student to read poem aloud.
13. Encourages use of worksheet	Teacher encourages students to use a worksheet on poem/poetry.
14. Invites silent reading	Teacher invites students to read poem silently.
15. Refers to exam	Teacher explicitly refers to the examination or examination passing techniques.
Student Behaviour	
Activity	**Descriptor**
16. Initiates	Student initiates talk about poem/poetry.
17. Responds	Student talks about poem/poetry in response to teacher.

EVENTS CHECKLIST

Time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1. Explains																				
2. Open question																				
3. Closed question																				
4. Responds																				
5. Reads aloud																				
6. Diagnostic follow-up																				
7. Writes notes on the board																				
8. Invites pair discussion																				
9. Invites small group discussion																				
10. Encourages poetry writing																				
11. Encourages writing about poetry																				
12. Invites reading aloud																				
13. Encourages use of worksheet																				
14. Invites silent reading																				
15. Refers to exam																				
16. Initiates																				
17. Responds																				

EVENTS CHECKLIST

Time	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
1. Explains																				
2. Open question																				
3. Closed question																				
4. Responds																				
5. Reads aloud																				
6. Diagnostic follow-up																				
7. Writes notes on the board																				
8. Invites pair discussion																				
9. Invites small group discussion																				
10. Encourages poetry writing																				
11. Encourages writing about poetry																				
12. Invites reading aloud																				
13. Encourages use of worksheet																				
14. Invites silent reading																				
15. Refers to exam																				
16. Initiates																				
17. Responds																				

EVENTS CHECKLIST

Time	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
1. Explains																				
2. Open question																				
3. Closed question																				
4. Responds																				
5. Reads aloud																				
6. Diagnostic follow-up																				
7. Writes notes on the board																				
8. Invites pair discussion																				
9. Invites small group discussion																				
10. Encourages poetry writing																				
11. Encourages writing about poetry																				
12. Invites reading aloud																				
13. Encourages use of worksheet																				
14. Invites silent reading																				
15. Refers to exam																				
16. Initiates																				
17. Responds																				

D. Observation rating scale

1 – No evidence
2 – Limited evidence
3 – Some evidence
4 – Clear evidence

Lesson Introduction				
1. The session began on time.	1	2	3	4
2. The teacher identified the anticipated learning outcomes for the session.	1	2	3	4
Planning and Organisation				
3. The teacher related the session to previous sessions and set it in the overall context of the syllabus component.	1	2	3	4
4. The teacher set out the structure of the session at the start.	1	2	3	4
5. The session appeared to be well-planned and organized.	1	2	3	4
Model/Approach				
6. The teacher appeared to use one specific poetry teaching model/approach: _____.	1	2	3	4
7. The teacher used a blend of poetry teaching models/approaches.	1	2	3	4
8. The teacher encouraged students to adopt one specific reading of the poem.	1	2	3	4
9. The teacher encouraged students to adopt multiple readings of the poem.	1	2	3	4
10. The teacher encouraged students to come up with their personal response to the poem.	1	2	3	4
Student Participation				
11. The teacher encouraged students to work independently of his/her involvement.	1	2	3	4
12. The students' participation appeared to be carefully planned.	1	2	3	4
Use of Learning Resources				
13. The teacher made use of a wide range of good quality resources (e.g. book, pack, handouts).	1	2	3	4
14. Visual resources were used (e.g. pictures, OHTs, PowerPoint, video).	1	2	3	4

15. Aural resources were used (e.g. audio recordings).	1	2	3	4
16. ICT was well integrated in the lesson.	1	2	3	4
Overall Style and Ambience				
17. The teacher seemed confident in delivery.	1	2	3	4
18. The teacher conveyed enthusiasm.	1	2	3	4
19. The teacher appeared to have a good rapport with the students.	1	2	3	4
20. The teacher seemed to have good presentation skills.	1	2	3	4
21. The teacher maintained eye contact with the students.	1	2	3	4
22. The teacher appeared to be sensitive to the students' mood.	1	2	3	4
23. The teacher appeared to have strong subject knowledge.	1	2	3	4
24. The teacher encouraged student interaction and communication.	1	2	3	4
25. The students seemed attentive.	1	2	3	4
26. The students appeared to be engaged during the lesson.	1	2	3	4
Lesson Conclusion				
27. The session ended on time.	1	2	3	4
28. The teacher summed up by referring to the learning outcomes achieved.	1	2	3	4
29. The teacher set work or reading to be done by the students in their study time.	1	2	3	4

Appendix 12 – Semi-structured Interview Guide: Teachers

Thank you for choosing to participate in this interview. Even though I shall be recording this interview, please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports. The recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course.

Enjoying Poetry

1. Which component do you prefer teaching most? [*the following follow-up question is to be asked only if the interviewee mentions poetry*] Why do you prefer teaching poetry? [*the following follow-up question is to be asked only if the interviewee mentions something other than poetry*] Why not poetry?

2. What sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure?

3. What do you understand by the term 'poetry'?

4. Do you enjoy reading, listening to or writing poetry? Why/why not?

5. Do you mostly read poetry for personal pleasure or for work purposes? Can you name some of the poets whose work you enjoy reading?

6. Do MC English students enjoy studying poetry? Why/why not? Which students enjoy studying poetry and which ones do not?

Choice of Poems

7. What do you think of the set text for poetry? What do you think of its appropriateness for students of this age and ability?

8. Who chooses the poems for the literary criticism poetry seminars? What do you think about this?

9. Do you encourage students to bring in any poems they would like to discuss with the rest of the class? Why/why not?

10. What kind of poems do you choose for the literary criticism poetry seminars? What criteria do you use when making your selections?

Teaching Poetry

11. Why do we teach poetry?

12. Should we continue teaching poetry in this day and age? Why/why not?

13. What do you give most importance to when teaching poetry?

14. What approach do you use when teaching Wilfred Owen's poetry?

15. What approach do you use when teaching the literary criticism of poetry?

16. What method do you use during a tutorial devoted to poetry?

17. Are there any changes that you would like to make to the way you teach poetry?

Innovations

18. Should students be provided with the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus? Why/why not?

19. Does literary theory have a part to play during poetry lessons? Why/why not?

20. What do you think of the idea of allowing students to experience poetry by means of other media not just the printed page? Do you attempt to do this?

21. Do you access poetry resources online? Why/why not?

Assessing Poetry

22. What do you ask your students to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry?

23. What do you ask your students to do when writing a literary criticism essay on an unseen poem?

24. Personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet. Do you usually encourage students to include their personal response in their essays about poetry? Why/why not?

25. Currently MATSEC assesses poetry by means of an essay. What do you think about this?

26. Are there any changes that you would like to see to the way poetry is being assessed?

Training

27. Do you think we should be provided with training on how to teach and assess poetry? Why/why not?

'Introduction to Poetry'

28. Now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview. Do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson? Why/why not?

Thank you for participating in this interview.

Appendix 13 – Semi-structured Interview Guide: Chief Examiner and Syllabus Developer

Thank you for choosing to participate in this interview. Even though I shall be recording this interview, please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports. The recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course.

1. A number of literary critics and educational theorists claim that poetry is experiencing a crisis not only in our schools but also in the world beyond the classroom. What are your thoughts on this issue?

2. From your experience as an examiner and syllabus developer, do you think that MC English students enjoy poetry? Why/why not? [*ask the following follow-up questions only in case the interviewee queries the meaning of the term 'poetry'*] What do you understand by it? Do students enjoy this kind of poetry?

The MC English Syllabus

3. Why does poetry form part of the MC English syllabus and examination?

4. Should students be provided with the opportunity to write poetry as part of the MC English syllabus? Why/why not?

5. In an appendix the 2013 syllabus explicitly states that 'Reference to literary critics and theorists does not make up part of the assessment criteria at Advanced Level' even though 'the examiners may choose to award evidence of broader reading within an author's work or across critique of that author, and/or reference to critics and theorists if these are discerningly and appropriately (rather than tokenistically) used' (MATSEC, 2010, p. 8). Does literary theory have a part to play in an MC English course? Why/why not?

Assessing Poetry

6. Why are the poetry components assessed by means of an essay?

7. What do you think of alternative methods of assessing poetry, e.g. course work, poetry writing in response to published poems etc.? Do they have a place on the syllabus?

8. The 2013 syllabus states that 'examiners will be looking for appreciation as much as critique' (MATSEC, 2010, p. 5) when assessing candidates' literary criticism essays on an unseen poem. How do you distinguish between the two terms?

9. Personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet. What value, if any, is a candidate's personal response to an unseen poem or selection of poems from a set text given during the marking process?

10. What are your thoughts on the use of a published standard list of criteria by markers when marking literary criticism poetry essays and essays on a selection of poems from a set text? Should such a list be devised and made available to all relevant stakeholders by means of a detailed test manual?

11. What do you think is the influence of assessment on teachers' methodology and students' engagement with poetry?

12. Are there any changes that you would like to make to the way poetry is being assessed by the MC English examination?

Teaching Poetry

13. In the 2013 syllabus the description of what students are expected to do in the literary criticism components seems to heavily underscore the significance of a stylistic approach to the way students read and write about an unseen poem. Why does the syllabus implicitly recommend this particular approach?

14. What value do other poetry teaching models have (i.e. content-based, personal growth, and sociocultural models)?

15. What teaching techniques would you advise teachers to use when teaching poetry?

16. Are there any changes that you would like to see taking place in the teaching of poetry at postsecondary level?

'Introduction to Poetry'

17. Now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview. Do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience as an examiner and

syllabus developer? Why/why not?

Thank you for participating in this interview.

Appendix 14 – Semi-structured Interview Guide: Students

Thank you for choosing to participate in this interview. Even though I shall be recording this interview, please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports. The recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course.

Enjoying Poetry

1. Which lessons do you like most out of your entire English course? Why do you like them? [*the following follow-up question is to be asked only if the interviewee mentions poetry:*] Why do you prefer poetry? [*the following follow-up question is to be asked only if the interviewee mentions something other than poetry:*] Why not poetry?

2. What sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure?

3. What do you understand by the term 'poetry'? [*the following follow-up questions are to be asked only if the interviewee does not mention lyrics:*] Do you consider song lyrics to be poetry? Why/why not?

4. Do you enjoy reading or listening to poetry? Why/why not?

5. Do you read poetry for personal pleasure or for study purposes? Can you name some of the poets whose work you enjoy reading?

Choice of Poems

6. Do you like all or any of Wilfred Owen's poetry? Why/why not?

7. Do you like all or any of the poems you read during your literary criticism poetry seminars? Why/why not?

8. Do you like all or any of the poems you are asked to write about for your tutorials? Why/why not?

9. Who chooses the poems for the literary criticism poetry seminars? What do you think about this? Should students be encouraged to bring poems or lyrics to class?

Studying Poetry

10. Why do we study poetry?

11. Should we continue studying poetry in this day and age? Why/why not?

12. Do you enjoy studying poetry?

13. If I say 'poetry lesson' to you, what comes to mind?

14. Is there anything you like about your poetry lessons (lectures/seminars/tutorials)?

15. Is there anything you don't like about your poetry lessons (lectures/seminars/tutorials)?

16. What do you usually do during your poetry lessons (lectures/seminars/tutorials)?

17. Do you enjoy what you usually do during your poetry lessons? Why/why not?

18. Is there anything else that you would you like to do during your poetry lessons (lectures/seminars/tutorials)?

19. What are you gaining out of your poetry lessons (lectures/seminars/tutorials)?

20. Have your poetry lessons at Junior College encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure? Why/why not?

21. Do your teachers read poetry?

Writing Poetry

22. Have you ever written any poetry? When? Why/why not?

23. Have you ever written any song lyrics? When? Why/why not?

24. Would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus? Why/why not?

Writing about Poetry

25. What have your teachers told you to do when writing an essay about Wilfred Owen's poetry…and about an unseen poem?

26. Personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet. Do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry? Why/why not?

'Introduction to Poetry'

27. Now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview. Do

you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson? Why/why not?

Thank you for participating in this interview.

Appendix 15 – Focus Group Topic Guide: Students

Thank you for choosing to participate in this discussion. Even though I shall be recording our discussion, please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports. The recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of our discussion and the study itself in due course.

Enjoying Poetry

1. What do you understand by the term poetry? [*If students do not mention 'song lyrics' ask the following question:* Do you consider song lyrics to be poetry? Why/why not?]

2. Do you enjoy reading or listening to poetry? Why/why not?

Studying Poetry

3. Why do we study poetry?

4. Should we continue studying poetry in this day and age? Why/why not?

5. What do you usually do during your poetry lessons (lectures/seminars/tutorials)?

6. What do you like about your poetry lessons (lectures/seminars/tutorials)?

7. What don't you like about your poetry lessons (lectures/seminars/tutorials)?

8. Is there anything else that you would like to do during your poetry lessons (lectures/seminars/tutorials)?

9. Have your poetry lessons at Junior College encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure? Why/why not?

Writing Poetry

10. Would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the MC English syllabus? Why/why not?

Writing about Poetry

11. Personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a

particular poet. Do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry? Why/why not?

'Introduction to Poetry'

12. Now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to discuss it together as a group. Then I'd like you to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed. Do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson? Why/why not?

Thank you for participating in this discussion.

Appendix 16 – Interview Stimulus Material: 'Introduction to Poetry' by Billy Collins

I ask them to take a poem
and hold it up to the light
like a colour slide

or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem
and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem's room
and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski
across the surface of a poem
waving at the author's name on the shore.

But all they want to do
is tie the poem to a chair with rope
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose
to find out what it really means.

Appendix 17 – Standardised Transcription Code

Nonverbal sounds and gestures: **[ ]**

Pause: *****

Longer pause: ******

Exclamation: **!**

Rising intonation (i.e. question): /

Appendix 18 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Teacher A

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * let's start with some questions about your teaching and reading preferences *which component do you prefer teaching most/

TEACHER: *** texts I think

INTERVIEWER: such as * the novels you mean

TEACHER: novels Shakespeare * and the poets because they give you more amplitude and you put them within a context so that the students can understand

INTERVIEWER: why do you enjoy teaching poetry/

TEACHER: ** that's a tough cookie [laughs] * why do I like spaghetti Bolognese/ ** I think it's the internal constitution of the person that has to do with whether one likes it or not * I think I don't have the answers to most of the things you're going to ask * I can imagine what you're going to ask me * it's so intuitive that you rarely become analytical about the things you enjoy * I've done this for forty five years for God's sake * they're next to breathing and smoking you know

INTERVIEWER: and what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

TEACHER: you will be surprised * you'd call it garbage * I study the Second World War a lot * so I like particularly aviation * I read very few novels and less poetry

INTERVIEWER: how come/

TEACHER: because it's a break * it's a break because things here can get so intense that you don't want to sort of imprison yourself in this academic world * rather than an escape it's living on two storeys of the same house I would say * do you understand/ when you're fed up one storey you move to the next one

INTERVIEWER: what do you understand by the term poetry/

TEACHER: ** I will * I think you were present when [referring to a personal anecdote he narrated during the observed lesson] * it bothers me what the hell is poetry/ * and you get all these definitions but this is true * my daughter was very young * perhaps three or four * and we'd gone into the habit of my reading her

something before she goes to sleep * and she had just got this big story book from her aunt and there was the story of Cinderella * I had been bothered because if a student is intelligent enough to put his finger up and say OK wise guy you're teaching poetry * what the heck is it/ what answer would I give that would sound convincing/ * while I was reading this we came to the famous passage where the fairy godmother transformed a pumpkin into a carriage * and I snapped the book shut * Eureka! [laughs] * I said that's it and I ran downstairs * of course hell was let loose the daughter complaining doesn't want to sleep my wife saying what the hell's got over you * and I went to write because nothing is more ridiculous and banal and everyday than a pumpkin but poetry is the kind of fairy godmother that transforms it into the golden carriage * poetry talks about the life you and I live but it gives you insight * it gives gloss to even the most humdrum and ridiculous and pathetic of things and you come to appreciate life more because life custom habitude make everything seem dull and ordinary * but when the poet gives you this pause to look at things in a new way even emotions in a new way then you come to appreciate the value of things

INTERVIEWER: so you see it as a * it defamiliarises the habitual

TEACHER: yes!

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading listening or writing poetry/

TEACHER: I do write I must admit that but I was never published

INTERVIEWER: and why do you enjoy doing that/

TEACHER: I don't think it's a question of enjoyment * it gives you a tremendous thrill while you're doing it * it's a need * it's the overflowing of the cup somehow * you can't help it * you know what I mean/ * I can't really express it * it doesn't come often * I would say about three times a year * I get what they call the muse if you like * it doesn't mean I'm a poet ** I write something that I think is poetry but if it is it would be for others to judge not me * I've never called myself a poet

INTERVIEWER: and how about listening and reading poetry/

TEACHER: ** I love reading poetry * I love it * reading it aloud especially to an audience * we're very fortunate here that we have been granted a captive audience * these poor devils can't do anything about it * but when you finish and you see a kind of glint in their eye if you manage to hit it * this often happens in Shakespeare for example * language is so revealing and they see suddenly there's this burst of

recognition of grandeur * ah that's * I don't think even a good football game beats that

INTERVIEWER: do you mostly read poetry for personal pleasure or for work purposes/

TEACHER: professionally I can't avoid it ** no * for personal purposes I know that I read poetry once * only once in my life * my father died and you know you do funny things when * I went to my bookshelf and I took out *Hamlet* and I started going through it * it's very difficult to find a cause a reason for this * it's hardly logical * but I was looking for something and I found exactly what I wanted and I read it right through * the most important line was oh what a noble mind is here overthrown * I was trying to find something to solace me in the sense that someone else had been in my shoes but if only I could speak like him and this is precisely the function of the poet * he is taking the humdrum the things we all know but they're stated in such a way close to the angelic * isn't it/

INTERVIEWER: which would you consider to be your favourite poets/

TEACHER: what you would expect from a poor humble sixth form teacher * your Larkin your Hughes * there are so many * we're fortunate in our job because you tend to sift to come up with the best anyway * those that give you the most satisfaction * I'm not excluding modern poets though I couldn't mention too many names because you know you read them once and that's it * it goes * at my age memory starts going first * but absolutely what you would expect of a chap like me to like if you understand

INTERVIEWER: do our students MC English students enjoy studying poetry in your opinion/

TEACHER: it's very hard to tell what students enjoy apart from the canteen [laughs] * I do think they like the crit lessons provided that they feel sufficiently involved * I must admit I have had many many students who I caught absolutely snoring * it hurts you * really it should hurt the poet but I'm the instrument conveying the ideas of the poet * some people just don't respond to poetry * then you get the eager beavers * yesterday for example a student after the lecture * she had written something and wanted me to see it * poetry * and I said jolly good I'll take a look and then I said you're enjoying this * oh the expression on her face was priceless * I'm not saying that the others were not enjoying it * they were absolutely riveted and that's dramatic in itself * but this girl is different and every year you have someone who is really

sensitive * and this is the whole point * we are there to heighten the sensibility and the sensitivity to words * some people are hypersensitive * they pass in spite of you not because of you and with the rest your job is to make them aware of this vast ocean of words and the thrill and the emotion that particular words particularly well placed can provide * this is impossible to achieve in a normal conversation * it can only be achieved in a crit class or in a text class because you coax and you open up * this I think is essential in lecturing

INTERVIEWER: so which students would you say particularly enjoy poetry/

TEACHER: I think there are certain characteristics by means of which you can identify them * I think it's background * it is very hard very very hard to stimulate people coming from materialistic backgrounds * let me explain because I could be accused of various things here * some people are materialistic because they can't afford to be intellectual * life is grind and they are used to work work work physical * now they come from certain strata of society even certain geographic localities * I don't wish to go into it anymore any deeper but this is a fact that to stimulate people with this hardnosed background to life is very difficult because the preconception is always there * if you come from a background in which your parents think that literature is a complete waste of time you're not going to be too inspired either * but if you get people who are used to having books in the house whose parents read * who have certain conversations at home then they will be stimulated * the others it's not that they are not potentially sensitive but they are not stimulated * so you have to do the stimulation and very often they just dismiss you as an intrusion in their lives really * they're just using you to get a grade in the examination and that's it

INTERVIEWER: let's move on to talk about choice of poetry * what do you think of the set text for poetry/ Wilfred Owen * what do you think of its appropriateness for students of this age and ability/

TEACHER: well he's a shocker and shock tactics are sometimes very useful when you're teaching * he has a lot to offer he is young * is I use the word is * is young and therefore tends to speak in terms of youthfulness * for example there is a line that stuns me really * in * what's the name of that poem in which a chap is injured and is in a wheelchair/

INTERVIEWER: disabled

TEACHER: disabled * he's lost his hands * he will never again feel how slim young girls' waists are * only a young man could write that * an old man like me knows

they are slim [laughs] but the sense of discovery even the discovery of sensuality is captured perfectly and when I tell them that they all look at me with a certain look you know * they're going through that * and for the boys there is the appeal of the expectation of glory contrasting with the actual sordid reality * for the girls it's the participation in a world so entirely masculine that it actually titillates them * they are being allowed a peek into a male domain and I think it keeps them going * now this didn't always work * we did have unsuitable texts * but no Owen * he's a master craftsman he's got a lot to offer * he's got a variety of approaches to convey the message * the form he uses * he is a bit dull if I may use that word because of the theme * it's like a diamond with many faces but it's still the same diamond * I think he is a very appropriate choice * I remember the poet I enjoyed teaching most was Larkin but he was damn difficult * he was so English

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism poetry seminars/

TEACHER: I choose them * usually I base myself on that crappy little book I produced because it's got a lot of poems and I can use whatever I need * you use poems with a specific target in mind * you know you want to reinforce something theoretical with something actual * I use the internet a lot to download I find it very helpful

INTERVIEWER: do you encourage students to bring poems in class/

TEACHER: no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

TEACHER: never occurred to me

INTERVIEWER: any particular reason/

TEACHER: no it just never struck me ** there is this you see * is it me who enters the lecture room/ I was telling my wife yesterday * I was talking about this and I said I wonder what he's going to come up with * I said I'm going to have very few answers because the [teacher's name] you meet the [teacher's name] who is your colleague I don't think he's the [teacher's name] who is in the classroom * something happens * I will admit to you that I go out bathed in sweat and tired * Daniel I cannot take three hours at a stretch anymore * two hours just floor me and when I go home I've got the million mile look * it takes me time to come back * so how can you analyse what is going on/ * why did it never occur to me to tell them bring poems with you/ * ah well thank you for telling me * it's an interesting idea

INTERVIEWER: what kind of poems do you choose for the literary criticism poetry seminars/

TEACHER: it depends on my target

INTERVIEWER: your criteria * what would your criteria be/

TEACHER: suppose I'm trying to reinforce imagery * I would do something like the one I did during the lesson you observed * wind * if I'm doing something like rhythm * or rhyme there's an excellent poem called tarantella there * you know you have targets and you use them * and of course throughout the years I've come to know which poems do what * so you have what you could call a repertoire if you want * I vary it not to die of boredom myself if you understand * and it's always a challenge when you've been using the same poem over the years and you say I'll replace it I'll use this one * you don't know if it's going to work you don't know what your students' attitude will be or how your delivery is going to be so you get a bit of trepidation there

INTERVIEWER: now let's move on to talk about the teaching of poetry * why do we teach poetry/

TEACHER: I've often asked myself * why should the advanced level be so heavily inclined towards literature when apparently the objective would be to ensure that we produce students who are better than good at speaking understanding English * it's a hangover from colonial times of course * I think that in spite of all the bitterness that accompanied the British stay here in Malta I think we're very fortunate in the sense that when compared to other Mediterranean islands we are culturally very very advanced next to those people * we are multilingual not just bilingual * secondly it produced a phenomenon by which a completely Mediterranean mind and hence a hybrid kind of mind came also to absorb the Anglo Saxon culture and this gives us a mind that is able to respond to situations sometimes with a duality and a conflict and sometimes with surprising differences to responses by other people * for example we can understand English humour which the Italians find absolutely impossible ** literature poetry especially does impose on the lecturer this duty of absorbing immersing himself in this * because you cannot teach another country's literature without being immersed in its culture * it's impossible * and then of course like a sponge that is dipped in a bucket of water when it's absorbed more than enough it starts dripping and that's what you give to your students * but first you have to be absolutely saturated with the culture and then it starts dripping * and I think this is

fantastic because when we speak of culture we speak of mind * if these people were not exposed to the Anglo Saxon culture they would have one mind * because they come here they have two minds three minds depends on what they study * so I think it's enriching and what else can enrich more than literature because literature can of course only be absorbed by people who have reached a certain economic standard * without the economic standard there would be no literature * thank God we have this economic standard and thank God we can bring to them these treasures

INTERVIEWER: should we continue teaching poetry in this day and age/

TEACHER: I think so

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: because poetry is always new and always true * it's like * if you don't have poetry it's like living in a house which has no mirrors ** poetry is essentially aimed at knowing yourself * essentially ** the function of poetry is to better people to make them gentler * it reminds me of Tennyson * the Ulysses when he says that he's unhappy because he's returned and he's now a king and he yearns for the adventure and he says what am I doing/ by small degrees to make mild a savage race * I love Tennyson I forgot to tell you I love Tennyson * it's a civilising process poetry and if we stop teaching poetry we are saying that we have stopped civilisation

INTERVIEWER: what approach do you use when teaching Wilfred Owen's poetry/

TEACHER: ** I think the first hurdle would be to project to these students the cataclysm in which these poems were written because it's not our world it's a different world * and I think I use shock tactics * when I do Owen I tell them this * I tell them the angel of death walked across Europe in 1914 1918 as he did when God kills all the first born in Egypt in the Bible * you have to shock them * they love stories * we must understand that teaching without storytelling is not effective * it's not effective * that of course gives us problems when teaching poetry because poems rarely have stories * so that's an added problem * poems are situational

INTERVIEWER: and what approach do you use when teaching the literary criticism of poetry/

TEACHER: here we have the situational problem * I've learnt one cussed thing about human beings * that human beings refuse to learn anything that they don't find useful * now * the main usefulness of doing poetry for them is that it is a sine qua non for a pass * but that is not real usefulness * that is utility * so I ask myself listen I'm going to do a poem in what way can I make it useful to them/ * not this

utilitarianism but making sure that they walk out of my lecture room feeling that they have been enriched * so I always try to look at poems in a way that is strictly personal * the you in it * now the you in it can be either something that you know but never so well expressed * I also forgot to tell you that Pope is also one of my favourites [laughs] * or else it could be something so completely out of your world that it stuns you ** Hughes I think is very good at that isn't he/ * he lets you penetrate the mind of a fox * it's like science fiction * either you read about your real world and discover things about it that you know or perhaps not * or else you take a fancy trip and go to other worlds completely unexplored * some poets have the ability to do that

INTERVIEWER: at one point during the observed lesson you said that poetry is meant to work on the heart more than on the head * could you elaborate on this/

TEACHER: yes! you see poetry requires an emotional response * I tell students don't think but feel * unless you feel the poem and what is being imparted by its language then it's all for nothing * you won't get it * so first allow it to work on your heart and then use your head * however you do find students who only want to know what it means and let's move on * and so they see that as your job * tell me what it means

INTERVIEWER: during the lesson you told the class that poetry requires an intuitive ability * what do you mean by this/

TEACHER: as I've just said poetry works on the heart * for it to tell you something you have to sense it with all of your being * poetry is elusive and forces you to go beneath the surface so students need to use their intuition to fully experience it otherwise it would just be damn difficult

INTERVIEWER: during the lesson you devoted a lot of attention to the linguistic aspect of the poem * could you explain why/

TEACHER: because it's poetry! * poetry is singular in its use of language * students want to focus on meaning meaning meaning but meaning can't exist without the poem's handling of language * sometimes they fail to see that * they think it's all a mystery * why bother hiding meaning in a poem when you can say it plainly enough in prose/ that's what they don't get sometimes * that poetry is playful and careful attention to its language could give them so much * I feel that when teaching poetry that's what we should try to make students appreciate most * without this attention to language we would be short changing students in a way

INTERVIEWER: what method do you use when doing a tutorial devoted to poetry/

TEACHER: tutorials devoted to poetry I think are the trickiest * you want to make sure that there is sufficient time for you to intervene * now you intervene for two reasons * either because the English is rotten or because the way they handle the poem is way west * the trouble is that you never do a real tutorial concerned with poetry * what happens is that you hear the first student and he's OK and you reserve your comments for the end * you hear the next one and he is absolutely off target so you stop him and you start explaining and wacko your hour is up * so you take the essays with you and you correct them * now the problem is that very often you have to write reams for each one * now if you have eight people that's going to take a hell of a long time * it's necessary it's essential but it's a devil of a thing * because with poetry you can have problems * students will probably fail to get the meaning

INTERVIEWER: are there any changes that you would make to the way you would teach poetry/

TEACHER: ** I wish I could teach better but that would need an analyst behind me telling me [teacher's name] don't do that do this and I told you I cannot be analytical because it is so spontaneous * and sometimes I'm surprised because I do the same poem with two groups and the lecture is completely different * words are treacherous * you hit on a word you open a window and teachers must always use windows

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about innovations now * should students be provided with the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

TEACHER: I don't think we're here to produce poets * assuming that a poet is born not made it would be a huge waste of time barking up wrong trees * I've had students who offer you their poems * I never say no * but that produces another problem * an ethical problem * how do you tell this person he's not a poet * he's the most prosaic of writers * it hurts him and you never know you might have another Owen who might change the way we see poetry * so I always write comments very non-committal not encouraging not discouraging

INTERVIEWER: does literary theory have a part to play during poetry lessons/

TEACHER: I think it's essential

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: the point is we're looking at the practical product the end result * and part of your job is to go into the merits the technical merits * but then of course there is the philosophical aspect of it * and that gets very very profound * your problem there with literary theory is I think two fold * one is how deep should I go with the

students * because you don't want to discourage them * and you don't want to make the theory more interesting than the poem itself * although some people might like and might go on into theory * the other problem I think is it's exactly what happens in dissection * you take a butterfly and you kill it and you cut it into bits and you might learn how a butterfly flies but that butterfly will never fly again * if you do it well if you do it really well then you do the dissection you show them how the butterfly flies and that butterfly will fly in many minds but you have to be a really good dissector

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea of allowing students to experience poetry by means of other media/ we're partly talking about technology here

TEACHER: what can I say ** you're talking to a student [laughs] don't kid yourself * so I look at myself would it surprise you if I told you that I went to England several times and never assisted at a Shakespeare play * and I never watch it on TV * and I don't have CDs * the reason is that the one in my mind is better * I'm always disappointed * the media disappoints me * it disgusts me * what interests me * especially when I'm in the classroom I try to be Shakespeare * I try to capture his mind all the nuances he had * if I see an adaptation of a play it does nothing for me * would it do things for students * oh I don't know * who am I to judge/ it might * I don't know * they're not yet fully formed * the media can be a great traitor * we've had students who did not read the text but based themselves on the film and the film was completely different in many ways * so I don't know

INTERVIEWER: do you access poetry resources online/

TEACHER: yes

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: yes * to know more * to heighten my sensitivity * sometimes you get insightful things and sometimes you get the most awful things * really awful

INTERVIEWER: let's move on to talk about assessing poetry * what do you ask your students to do when writing an essay about Wilfred Owen's poetry/

TEACHER: ** first of all they have to understand the title * this is where students fail * it's the last lesson that a second year learns because more often than not they will forge the title to what they know * with Owen you can rarely go wrong * with Owen they first have to capture the * there is a word for it * I was going to use genuinity * authenticity * the authenticity of the experience through poetry * it's not easy * this of course will make them go into the question of use of imagery use of

onomatopoeia sound effects the way he used half rhyme and so on and so forth to produce a dull echoing effect * that I think is important * it's essential * and Owen is not difficult for them * the subject of each poem is not difficult * my advice always is the poet is already complex enough in himself make sure your English is simple * don't use words you don't know just to impress * don't make your sentences too long * keep one idea for every sentence * these are basically the ideas I tell them

INTERVIEWER: what do you ask your students to do when writing a literary criticism essay on poetry/

TEACHER: it depends on the question ** personally I * with first years let's put it this way because they do not have a disciplined mind yet * I tell them write something about this poem * anything that you want to write about it * we've done it so you can take any aspect and talk about it * usually they tell you what it is about * Maltese students love theme * this probably comes because of our intimate relationship with religion * the idea that there is an abstract concept behind everything * with the second years of course you try to teach them that they've got to be more technical * they've got to be more precise * they've got to indicate which phrase which word which line produces this effect * that requires a more structured mind * you cannot expect that from the first years though you do get some first years who are able to cope with that

INTERVIEWER: personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually encourage students to include their personal response in their essays about poetry/

TEACHER: very much so

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: because it conforms with my idea that poetry has to be personal * to be meaningfully personal or personally meaningful * otherwise I'm just teaching them to pass an examination to conform to ideas * I even tell them listen guys you might think that what I'm saying is outrageous * well knock it down and come up with something better * I have had students who have come up with ideas better than mine * they make more sense * they actually make more sense * I tell myself listen it's not a question of an alternative interpretation * that is the interpretation not the one I've got and I tell them as much * here you destroy the impression that the chap over there knows everything and you know nothing * that's the beginning of university

INTERVIEWER: currently MATSEC assesses poetry by means of an essay * what do you think about this/

TEACHER: ** I've been here for so long that I've seen the various methods and tactics * before we used to have set questions * now set questions are good * they have their pros and cons * they are good because they focus the mind on a target but God help you if you don't know how to talk about that target * you've had it * with the open ended approach the danger is that you go out of context * an essay that is not disciplined it does not have logical sequencing and they fail to find le mot juste they don't hit the target * diffusion is the main danger associated with the open ended question * with the other one its focusing but focusing has its dangers as diffusion has its dangers so panacea/ I have none

INTERVIEWER: are there any changes to the way poetry is being assessed by MATSEC right now/

TEACHER: look this is a very tricky question * I don't have any solutions to this but I would like to see a more helpful approach in the sense that these guys are scared stiff * when you're scared stiff close to panic in crit you often forget even the simple things that you knew * even words don't come easy so I would like to see the examiner being a bit more helpful * why should the exam be a quiz * if he is giving them a poem that is not exactly on the surface * a bit abstruse * then I think there should be in the rubric a brief explanation of what it's about * in this way you take away the bloody fear that students are bound to feel * now they know what it is about * now how does he go about saying it * after all that's what I'm after isn't it * but just chucking it at them and telling them right let me see what they do with it * what the hell do you do with it/ they only have an hour * you've got to read the poem figure it out and write about it * so I think a more benevolent approach would reap huge rewards really * but I've never been happy with the approach to the correction of essays * but that is something else

INTERVIEWER: could you comment on that/

TEACHER: well they expect too much * they have very high expectations * too high * and the focus is not on the English that the student is using but whether he is saying the right thing or not * and how can you do that/ I can assure you that most of us would fail if someone were to give us a poem and in ten minutes to come to a proper conclusion about it * match your thoughts to those of the examiner * how can you predict/

INTERVIEWER: the last question before we move on to a little task * do you think we should be provided with training on how to teach and assess poetry/

TEACHER: [laughs] no! [laughs] at my age * I've only got seven months left * it would be a complete bloody waste of time in my case

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

TEACHER: I think it hits the jackpot this one doesn't it * it's what we've been talking about really ** the first bit does talk about stimulating their curiosity doesn't it/ and I think that it is it * there is this constant push between lecturer and students * you want them to get curious and they just want to get the answer * this is basically what he is saying * now the first thing I point out to my students is how intelligent and curious we were at age two and how brain dead we are later in life * the difference is that when we're two we're curious * we want to probe with our fingers we want to taste to touch * when you grow older this curiosity stops and that's when you're brain dead * I tell them when you go home you all know how to watch TV and switch channels but you don't ask yourselves how it works and I tell them that's dangerous * that's like being in a small aeroplane in the cockpit with the pilot and the pilot dies * what the hell are you going to do/ the danger of taking things for granted * so with poetry I tell them words not sentences * each individual word * now what students do is when they see a difficult word they act as if it does not exist * they gloss over it * the ideal is to have students who come to your lesson with the thesaurus and the dictionary * if I had a group who always carried with them a dictionary and a thesaurus I'd make them work like camels and I would get the results * I'm confident enough to say that if I had a group like that I would guarantee a pass because their failure is in curiosity and vocabulary * that is the major failure of students

INTERVIEWER: and why do they tie the poem to a chair and torture it in your opinion/

TEACHER: well I don't think they tie the poem to a chair * I think they tie you with a chair * I had this problem last year * they were driving me nuts * zombies * I talk and talk and talk and then I used to tell them right now write a paragraph about this aspect * and I wait ten fifteen minutes and say tell me what you've written * I

haven't wrote anything sir * they're torturing me to tell them * they want the answer * they think I have all the answers

INTERVIEWER: why do they adopt that attitude/

TEACHER: possibly it's got to do and I couldn't comment on that with the rest of the educational jungle * it's what happens out there * our students are not being given the chance to express themselves * the teacher should ask them I want to see do you like this poem/ or are you indifferent/ * and if they say *boqq* [Maltese expression meaning 'don't know'] * and he'd say let's see because you cannot be indifferent to a poem like this * now let's see if I can make it meaningful to you and you stop being indifferent and you make them talk but I think this is missing * have you noticed for example that we've got practically everything in this college except a debating society/ * we've never had it * I'm not sure it would be successful but if we had a debating society * not in English because you would find very few people who would come forward * I think it would stimulate minds * I think we should use that * we don't want cheekiness * it's participatory rather than confrontational * encouraging critical skills* you get them * in two groups I usually get two students one from each group who are ready to ask and talk * only two

INTERVIEWER: I think we're done * thank so much for your time and contribution

TEACHER: can I keep this/

INTERVIEWER: of course * it's a good poem isn't it/

TEACHER: it is

INTERVIEWER: thank you for participating in this interview

Appendix 19 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Teacher B

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * the first few questions are about your own preferences * which component do you prefer teaching most/

TEACHER: I prefer poetry in general OK/

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: the reason is very simple * it's because in poetry there is more conciseness and there's more discovery you know * it's more interesting to communicate what you have discovered and trying to urge the students to discover more in the poem * I don't know * I think I prefer Shakespeare because Shakespeare's so rich but I don't mind other poets but I prefer to teach poems that have a * kind of relation to life rather than decorative poetry if you know what I mean * you know/ so that's why I like Wilfred Owen I like Philip Larkin

INTERVIEWER: poetry that the students can relate to/

TEACHER: even I can relate to * they say something not just you know talking about how beautiful a fish is or how beautiful a bird is

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

TEACHER: for personal pleasure I don't read much fiction nowadays to be honest * I read philosophical books and scientific books * I do read some poetry just for pleasure but not extensively

INTERVIEWER: can you name any poets that you read/

TEACHER: for pleasure I go to Larkin * I love Larkin

INTERVIEWER: and what do you understand by the term poetry/

TEACHER: it's a very difficult question to answer because * poetry * I see it as a complete literary work that is basically is relatively concise * and it can be read in a short period of time and * it communicates artistically * what the author wants to basically communicate using various techniques * I mean these techniques vary of course * I mean there's no particular * in the past there was the rhyme and rhythm and nowadays that's all been thrown out of the window so * but there's something

which makes it still in a way rhythmical still complete I mean there's a beginning and an ending in a very short space of time

INTERVIEWER: you've mentioned that you enjoy reading poetry but do you also enjoy listening and writing poetry/

TEACHER: writing poetry I used to write but nowadays I don't have time * I can write poetry I suppose I can * listening to poetry not particularly not so much no * I prefer reading it at my own pace

INTERVIEWER: you find that better/

TEACHER: yes I think it's better * OK if you've read a poem a few times and then you listen to somebody reading it out then it's OK but the first time I prefer reading it myself

INTERVIEWER: do you mostly read poetry for personal pleasure or for work purposes/

TEACHER: ** I mean considering my circumstances I tend to read more for work purposes but I wouldn't mind reading it for pleasure too * I mean I encourage students to read for pleasure

INTERVIEWER: do MC English students enjoy studying poetry/

TEACHER: their very attitude to poetry in general * I'm talking about the students in general of course there are exceptions * their attitude is that they consider poetry basically useless * even when you point out to them that Shakespeare is poetry they still think it's a play it's a story * but eventually I find that they do appreciate the necessity of reading poetry

INTERVIEWER: and why do they consider it useless/ why do they have that attitude/

TEACHER: because like many other artistic works * I mean like paintings it's not something which is a utility item * I mean you can live without it * I mean you know how utilitarian most young people are nowadays/ I mean they are * do I have to study this/ then I have to study it * if I don't have to then I don't study it * it's something which they don't really need in life * I mean poetry is not something we need in life * we can eat we can drink we can enjoy ourselves without poetry * so that's basically the reason but then you know when they become more refined in their tastes and you try to convince them

INTERVIEWER: do you see a change in their attitude/

TEACHER: I do see a change * not in the same grade in everybody but * some people remain the same they do it because the have to do it * but even when I talk to students who are much older now they still remember poetry the way I used to teach it to them * the passion for it is still there

INTERVIEWER: your passion for it/

TEACHER: yes yes

INTERVIEWER: let me ask you some questions about choice of poems * what do you think of the set text for poetry/ that is Wilfred Owen * what do you think of its appropriateness for students of this age and ability/

TEACHER: Wilfred Owen I think it's a good text for practical purposes * I mean of course there could be other poets but for practical purposes from the history of Junior College I find that Wilfred Owen is one of the most popular with students because they have a certain affinity with his obsession with violence for example * death * they don't know much about the First World War and through Owen they learn a lot about it * they tend to think that they are living in a very bad time * we have wars nowadays etcetera but in actual fact when they realise how bad it was in the First World War and how much young people had to suffer and the difference * this is the most important thing * the difference between the media at the time how they used to glorify war and nowadays we have a controversial attitude towards war * they understand that and they find that the poetry of Wilfred Owen tries to show the truth and so they find it relevant to their interests yes

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism poetry seminars/

TEACHER: I do I do * OK I do what I've done in the past * I choose some other poems myself * again once again I try to * first of all I try to give them a kind of chronological idea of how poetry developed over the years and how it changed from one era to the next and even how the choice of subject how it changed * at the same time I always try to as much as possible choose poems that have some kind of application in life * you know if they're talking about for example the hypocrisy of people or nature and knowledge and academic knowledge * things like that I try to choose them with a kind of a purpose * at the same time it would also stimulate their critical skills * I very much believe in critical thinking not just in poetry but in everything

INTERVIEWER: do you encourage students to bring in any poems that they would like to discuss with the rest of the class/

TEACHER: to be honest with you I've never done that no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

TEACHER: I never felt the need to do that really * because no student ever mentioned or showed any interest * maybe I should do it [laughs] never thought about it really

INTERVIEWER: and what kind of poems do you choose for the literary criticism poetry seminars/ you've partly answered this question but what criteria do you use when making your choice/

TEACHER: * as I said I tend to avoid poems that talk too much about * what I consider to be subjects that irrelevant to life you know/ so I don't really base it so much on canonical writers * I choose it on the subject matter if it's interesting to the students and secondly of course that they can find things to discuss * I mean poetry that is too obscure that I can't even decipher myself I mean I won't choose them because they are very subjective to the poet who wrote them so I have to find poems that mean something and that their meaning is that obscure that it's impenetrable * so that's important

INTERVIEWER: now let me ask you some questions about teaching poetry * why do we teach poetry/

TEACHER: well [laughs] that's a very good question * why do we teach poetry/ why do we teach anything/ why do we teach literature/ as I said we can do without many of the humanities subjects * we cannot do without science * it's important because without science life wouldn't move on but the arts are not essential they're not our bread and butter * but it develops a certain refinement in our appreciation of life

INTERVIEWER: should we continue teaching poetry in this day and age/

TEACHER: oh yes definitely definitely definitely as much as we should teach the appreciation of art as much as we should teach the appreciation of music the appreciation of other art forms like cinema etcetera * because it enriches the person * I feel that it enriches the person and it also aids in critical thinking and analysing what people write what people say

INTERVIEWER: what do you give most importance to when teaching poetry/

TEACHER: ** I think it's mostly the appreciation of the poem as a whole * something which you cannot put your finger on it something which you cannot define * as I said earlier the poem is something whole * it's got a kind of * OK to use a metaphor that has no bearing with reality * but the poem has a body and a soul it

has a spirit something that you cannot remove * it's a combination of many things so I find first of all the first thing to do is to see the poem as a whole from a distance and try to ask themselves what it's about and then see how this spirit is created * what techniques are used * as you know there is no formula * with science there's a formula of how to develop a good car but with poetry no matter how much you try that there's no formula for how to write a good poem as much as there is no formula of how to write a good song or how to paint a good painting * I mean there is no formula * it's something that happens through the ability of the write through his knowledge and through various techniques but it has an element of magic in it

INTERVIEWER: what approach do you use when teaching Wilfred Owen's poetry/

TEACHER: when teaching Wilfred Owen's poetry it's different because in that case since there is a set text you have to help the students get a good mark in the exam * so in that case I give them a lot * I do try to get out of them a bit too but I give them a lot so of course I give them background and in each poem what I do is try to explain the scenario the theme the techniques used etcetera * so mostly it's spoon feeding in the case of Wilfred Owen because after all we're here to help the students but I try also to make them discover things themselves * so although I present the situation to them I present the scenario I present the theme then I try with the details to let them find out things for themselves

INTERVIEWER: and when teaching the literary criticism of poetry/

TEACHER: that's different because I know that they're going to be faced with an unseen poem a poem that ninety nine percent they wouldn't have seen before * so in that case as I go along first I try to spoon feed them a bit but then as I go along I try to let them do the work * so we read a poem together * I try to get out of them as much as possible * they see the overall impression of the poem the mood the poet creates the tone that is used * and then after that we go into the details and analyse it chronologically and what it happen what phrases are being used what about those phrases you know

INTERVIEWER: during the observed lesson you referred to the exam on a number of occasions * could you explain why/

TEACHER: well it's obvious in a way * we have little time at hand and there's a lot to do in two years * crit is probably one of the most difficult areas for the students and despite how much practice they get they are always going to lack something in their essays * so you try you try to remind them of what is expected of them *

because sometimes it's as if the exam doesn't exist * I tell listen you need to do this or avoid doing this in the exam * whatever we might think of poetry we are ultimately preparing them for an important exam

INTERVIEWER: at one point you told the students that you'd rather see them writing something because you weren't getting enough reactions orally * could you elaborate on this/

TEACHER: you saw them * they barely speak and I ask and ask * at least when writing they're doing something participating a little * I'm getting something out of them that way * sometimes I think it's because of lack of confidence in speaking English but they do talk during other lessons * on Owen for example

INTERVIEWER: how do these students usually react during a poetry seminar/

TEACHER: they're very quiet and it's frustrating * I ask questions but it's always the same one or two students who answer

INTERVIEWER: is this the case with your other seminar groups as well/

TEACHER: yes * during crit it's pretty much the same

INTERVIEWER: during a tutorial devoted to a poem what do you do/ I mean the literary criticism of a poem as part of a tutorial

TEACHER: in that case again it's a different situation from crit and Owen because first I listen to them * I don't really do a criticism of the poem myself at first * I listen to what they have written and then of course comment about it and give them my own analysis but I always read the poem first before we start even if they're supposed to have read it * just to refresh their memories

INTERVIEWER: are there any changes that you would like to make to the way you teach poetry/

TEACHER: well maybe I could take your suggestion and ask them to bring poems themselves * perhaps * I've never done that * there are many other things which we could do but the problem is always time * there is not enough time * because we could even ask them to write poetry * but it's not possible

INTERVIEWER: in fact the next question is should students be provided with the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

TEACHER: yes I think they should * of course not everybody would be * I mean we not all have talents for writing although we tend to be good critics * usually they say that those who cannot write make good critics and they end up teaching poetry * no I don't think that our system is wrong * our system is good because we all have our

own attitudes and by the way what I didn't mention going back to Wilfred Owen is for example in the case of Wilfred Owen I do use listening materials I do recordings of practically all the poems and I try to make them listen to them * after we do four five poems they listen to professional readings of the poems by actors and

INTERVIEWER: why do you do that/

TEACHER: ** because after they've understood the poem to hear somebody who can really read a poem well with proper English pronunciation it will refresh their memories and they're following on the book and it will given them more life * in fact I've gone a step further and I've done a kind of video with some of the poems being illustrated with scenes from the war etcetera

INTERVIEWER: and how do the students react/

TEACHER: I think they reacted very well to that * they reacted much better to that than they reacted to the documentary about the First World War * but I do that I show it to them later on when they have done many other poems

INTERVIEWER: do you think that literary theory has a role to play in the teaching of poetry/

TEACHER: to be honest! not much I don't think so * I'm a bit old fashioned as you know * what I say to the students is that they're walking a very thin line between objectivity and subjectivity * it's mostly what the author says and their interpretation of it * basically * giving it interpretations like you know postmodernist Freudian Lacanian I mean * many of them to me don't make sense personally * I'm very old fashioned in this respect well not old fashioned because they're old fashioned now * I know I'm right nowadays I've been proven right by many of the contemporary writers ** of course intertextuality in Wilfred Owen is found a lot but you don't have to call it intertextuality * I mention it to the students because I know they're going to be faced with that later on but I don't think it's extremely important to refer to it as intertextuality * it doesn't have to be like that so at this stage they can't afford to they're not prepared for it and personally I don't think it's important * not even in the future [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: you've partly answered this question * what do you think of the idea of allowing students to experience poetry by means of other media not just the printed page/

TEACHER: I'm very much in favour of that and for example there are poems that have been put to music too * you know like William Blake's 'Jerusalem' * there are

many such poems * it's a good idea to do that * or there are for example singers who are very poetic but again it's a problem it's a question of time so I do include media as much as possible but we are limited by time and also by facilities I have to admit that

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the facilities here/

TEACHER: not good not really no no because I tell you why * because we have two media rooms * you have to book them you have to find them available and the sound is not very good * the picture is OK but there is a problem with the sound * and besides that we cannot use our own rooms * ideally * I have my own projector but then you need the sound you need the curtains so it's not easy * ideally every room should be equipped so that you can just put on a switch and the blinds would come down * interactive white boards for example

INTERVIEWER: do you access poetry resources online/

TEACHER: yes of course yes

INTERVIEWER: for teaching purposes or else just for personal pleasure/

TEACHER: for personal pleasure and for teaching purposes I mean you know I've even contributed to some of them when I had time but now I'm very busy at the moment

INTERVIEWER: let's move on to talk about assessing poetry * what do you ask your students to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

TEACHER: mostly because with Wilfred Owen they already know much about the poem because as I've said I give them a lot of information I advise them to compare and contrast more than anything else because usually they don't have to write about one poem usually they have to write about more than one poem and to have coherence in the essay they have to compare and contrast according to theme or according to style or according to motif depending * so mostly I advise them to use that kind of technique * what they shouldn't do is rewrite the poem in their own words of course * so they should choose the parts that are relevant to that particular question and then find other poems that are connected to that particular question and compare and contrast basically

INTERVIEWER: and when it comes to an essay on the literary criticism of poetry/

TEACHER: literary criticism is different of course * because you have one poem and it's an unseen poem and they wouldn't be prepared for it so my system is to ask them to go to the poem a couple of times so that they get the feel of it and then in the

introduction to talk about the theme * not a paraphrase of the poem but the theme and maybe the tone or the style it depends on the poem itself but mostly the theme * so they find out what the subject of the poem is and how the poet is looking at the subject * say if it's death or if it's life or if it's birth * what attitude and what tone is he adopting in the poem * and then to go through the poem and analyse it by finding out the techniques that are standard like imagery diction mostly and rhythm * how he has achieved that particular effect

INTERVIEWER: personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually encourage students to include their personal response in their essays about poetry/

TEACHER: up to a point up to a point * I discourage them from being too subjective because then of course if a poem doesn't agree with them I don't want them to say that they don't agree with what the poet is saying * that's not important * if it's a poem about * let's say it talks about war for example * they don't agree with what the poet is saying * they don't have to say that they don't agree or that they disagree or they agree * that's not important * it's important their own response but not opinion * there's a difference between response and opinion * their emotional response their own artistic response to that particular poem * as I said earlier on there is a very thin line between subjectivity and objectivity * if they don't like fish and the poem is about fish they're not going to say I don't like the poem because it's about fish or because it's about football * it's important to see it from the author's point of view but there has to be a personal response but not entirely subjective * this element of subjectivity has to be very very delicate

INTERVIEWER: currently MATSEC assesses poetry by means of an essay * what do you think about this/

TEACHER: well I think that's the best thing to do * I don't like guided exercises to be honest because they limit the students * students have to face life and they're going to write about many things in life and they have to write an essay for that mostly so * although this is an analysis of literary criticism still to write in an essay form is the best way * you know because poems vary so it's the way you present it in an essay that shows your ability to write about something whether it's a movie whether it's a play a work of art or whatever

INTERVIEWER: are there any changes that you would like to see to the way poetry is being assessed currently/

TEACHER: assessed/ well we're not sure how it's assessed to be honest * some people say that the devices are not given importance * I'm not sure about that * well the devices shouldn't be given too much importance but on the other hand they are necessary because they are the language of the literature * I mean if you want to talk about art you have to talk about composition about the medium being used you know * I mean so you need to know the technical terms for literature but I don't think we should go too far on the other hand to include literary theory * so it has to be limited to the standard of the students * you should expose them to new ideas without necessarily relying on what philosophers and sociologists have said over the past few years

INTERVIEWER: one final question about training * do you think we should be provided with training on how to teach and assess poetry/

TEACHER: I don't see why not you know * I don't see why not * yes we should have courses every now and then both for the people who are coming in for the first time and those who have experience * I mean we don't have to follow everything that is on the courses * we don't have to agree with everything because what we're doing is art really not science but why not yes there should be course I think

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

TEACHER: not so much * the last part I don't think it's as bad as that * of course you find such students * we are dealing with different students every year * you find students who * I try to make them feel I try to make them appreciate poetry and you find students who try to do it mechanically but not all of them

INTERVIEWER: why do they do that/

TEACHER: they do that because * one because they're young and for them it's always black and white * we are dealing with students here who are between childhood and adulthood * they are not completely adults and they still think in terms of Tom and Jerry Batman and the Joker * black and white so they don't see the grey side * so for example if they have a poem about the birth of a baby * can't remember the name * even Sylvia Plath's poem for example they say how dare she talk about a baby like that * I mean they are a bit immature * even humour they don't appreciate

the humour * but eventually you try to get it out of them you try to educate them in that manner * for some of them it may work for some others it may not work

INTERVIEWER: do they think that a poem has one intrinsic meaning and that your job is to explain that intrinsic meaning to them/

TEACHER: no I allow them to give it different meanings and in certain cases there are different interpretations but yes they do they do of course accept what I tell them as final * but I try to open them up to other interpretations but other interpretations of course limited to what the poet is saying * if there's no evidence for that interpretation then it's not valid * they have to validate they have to justify their interpretation

INTERVIEWER: that's it * thanks a lot for this interview

Appendix 20 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Teacher C

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * the first few questions are about your own preferences * which component do you prefer teaching most/

TEACHER: well I enjoy teaching poetry and prose crit but * I think I would opt for poetry/

INTERVIEWER: why do you prefer teaching poetry/

TEACHER: because it is more demanding * on me and my students

INTERVIEWER: demanding in terms of what/

TEACHER: demanding in terms of its concentration * poetry I feel is the most concentrated form of the use of words as communication * and I don't think it's coincidental that many find it difficult to read but the rewards I think are equally greater

INTERVIEWER: and what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

TEACHER: ** at this time in my life though I do read some poetry I must confess that poetry is not the material that I read most * mostly at this moment I read material for research purposes ** books about modernity and literary theory and philosophy also * as well as anthropology * but obviously this is in a sense conditioned by my research and by my work * although I must admit I do enjoy reading them or some of them any way

INTERVIEWER: and what do you understand by the term poetry/

TEACHER: the term poetry/ * it's the use of words to achieve deep insights both cognitive and emotional * it's a special use of words meant to release I think the communicative energy that inhere in language and as such it is * some people claim that poetry originates in magical spells and chanting and I think it's a means of contacting the deepest layers of our minds and hearts and this is why it still has its magic * obviously in good poetry

INTERVIEWER: you've mentioned that you enjoy reading poetry how about listening and writing poetry/

TEACHER: I prefer reading because the act of reading it gives me time to concentrate more although listening has also it's kind of spellbinding effect because in a sense receiving poetry through the ear * that is using the musicality and sounds of words has its own impact which obviously are lost in writing * but obviously poetry does demand repeated raids on the inarticulate and I think reading for that is necessary

INTERVIEWER: how about writing poetry/ do you write any poetry or have you every dabbled in poetry/

TEACHER: yes I have ages ago but not nowadays

INTERVIEWER: are there any poets that you enjoy reading in particular/

TEACHER: mostly I'm still loyal to the modernists the great modernists obviously * Yeats Eliot and perhaps those who followed them Heaney Larkin * I confess I'm less drawn to more recent poetry

INTERVIEWER: do you mostly read poetry for personal pleasure or for work purposes/

TEACHER: definitely for pleasure! definitely for pleasure! * that's I think with poetry unless you approach like that you can't get anywhere near it * obviously there are the spin offs of insight into human life into the kind of world we're living in but the primary motive remains sheer pleasure * in words in language in its masterful and delicate and powerful use by great poets

INTERVIEWER: do MC English students enjoy studying poetry/

TEACHER: not all definitely * and I don't expect them all to enjoy poetry * this is I think unrealistic * you can't force poetry on anyone and as there are some people who are tone deaf in music I think there are people who are poetry deaf

INTERVIEWER: who you say that the majority enjoy studying poetry/

TEACHER: I think you can widen the scope and interest among students * you can win over those who have a certain aptitude which might not be quite well developed for a number of reasons but there are students just as there are people who are constitutionally resistant to poetry

INTERVIEWER: do students who enjoy poetry share any characteristics/

TEACHER: yes I think so * I think there is first of all a love of words * unless there is that * a kind of playful approach to words a kind of fascination with the use the

infinite variety of language I think they wouldn't approach anywhere close to poetry * secondly obviously it's a character trait like sensitivity and I think also a certain background which would have exposed them to * I'm thinking of earlier nursery rhymes * exposed them to the magic of sounds and rhythm * family and school background are very important especially in the early years * if they have been exposed to the playfulness the magic of sounds and rhythm the tones * I think they would be more open and receptive to the lure of poetry

INTERVIEWER: let's move on to talk about the choice of poems * what do you think of the set text for poetry/ * what do you think of its appropriateness for students of this age and ability/

TEACHER: appropriate yes * Owen in particular because he is first of all accessible * aside from the power and the sheer artistry of his poems * I think most of our students have thankfully not have had any experience of war and the fact that Owen can make war so present imaginatively present and moving * the tragedy of it all * I think it is a good choice yes for students at our level

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism poetry seminars/
TEACHER: I choose them

INTERVIEWER: what do you think about this/

TEACHER: ** well I have to assess the capabilities and interests of my students * I don't think that most of them would read poetry spontaneously and I generally decide for poems which are within their level of competence and experience and interest because obviously not all poems are suitable for our students

INTERVIEWER: do you encourage students to bring in any poems in class to discuss with their peers/

TEACHER: no I don't * I've never done this

INTERVIEWER: any particular reason/

TEACHER: if a student occasionally turns up with some of his own poetry for me to read and you know and give my opinion I do obviously but usually it's a one to one basis and not in open class

INTERVIEWER: you've already partly mentioned the criteria you use when choosing poems for literary criticism seminars * are there any other criteria that you have in mind

TEACHER: level of difficulty is important too * it's no use pushing hermetic poems with our students or highly experimental poems * risking the danger of putting

students off poetry forever * so choice has to be very careful otherwise you risk killing their budding interest in poetry * you might go on then to present different sorts of poetry but first you have to begin with what is accessible relevant and within their area of competence and interest

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about the teaching of poetry * why do we teach poetry/

TEACHER: why do we teach poetry/ because it is totally useless * in the sense that * like much art you can live without it * there are millions of people who live without it * in our kind of society I think which is so heavily utilitarian the taste of the useless between inverted commas should be encouraged * poetry does not make money for you it does not in any way advance your career but it does make you wonder at being alive and I think our students need a kind of reconnection to the sheer unpredictability of being alive and being in a world full of things and people ugly beautiful good and bad * and poetry I think paradoxically serves this purpose but it should be I think * I can't imagine a world without poetry because although I have no scientific proof of this it's hardwired in our minds * perhaps it's not evident in most people but the fact that it's evident in even a minority shows its * how shall I put it/ * its existence and the need for that existence

INTERVIEWER: so how would you answer the question should we continue teaching poetry in this day and age/

TEACHER: of course * more so in this day and age which is very unpoetic * one favourite critic of mine Eric Heller once characterised modernity as the age of prose and in an age of prose with all that involves keeping poetry alive or allowing poetry to keep us alive is a necessity

INTERVIEWER: what do you give most importance to when teaching poetry/

TEACHER: words words * words and the use of words * poetry is a special use of words * it's a unique use of words * words are used everywhere for everything but in poetry there is a kind of concentration in the relation of words to each other and to reality which is unique and therefore I try to bring out what is essentially poetic * why should words be used like this and with what effect/ * yes that is the priority * words * and then obviously words are connected to ideas concepts feelings emotions * but primarily I would concentrate on the words as they are used

INTERVIEWER: what approach do you use when teaching Wilfred Owen's poetry/

TEACHER: ** well what I do is * I do adapt my methods but normally I give a brief overview of the poem and then we would plunge into the poem its language the power of its images the rhythms the half rhymes * so it's a kind of practical crit based on explanation and pointing to rather than asserting possible interpretations * finally after we've covered the poem thoroughly I usually end by giving a kind of critical summing up of what we've done with that particular poem * that's more or less the general method I use

INTERVIEWER: and what approach do you use when teaching poetry as part of literary criticism/

TEACHER: well at this stage literary criticism is not a conscious endeavour at our level * obviously I do refer to the skills of literary criticism but I do not do so systematically because our syllabus does not demand * and when I do refer to it I do make sure that it's within the capabilities of our students level of language competence and experience * I do introduce certain literary critical features but strictly in relation to what we're doing in the class not as such concentrating on the theories * the many theories that are involved in literary studies

INTERVIEWER: during the lesson I observed it was very interesting for me to notice that you repeatedly referred to sound and its effect in poetry * could you comment on why you did that/

TEACHER: yes! because it's ignored * it's ignored unfortunately * poetry as I told you lives in words and rhythm and sounds harking back to that kind of chanting origins of poetry are still important and unmissable features in the effect of poetry and sometimes * not sometimes often you have to bring them up because they are unfortunately elided * and training the ear to hear the musicality and cadence the nuance of words the nuance of sounds even the kind of almost emotional * impact that sounds of words have on us in and beyond the meaning of words * I think it's important in trying to communicate the power and beauty of poetry

INTERVIEWER: you ended the lesson by inviting students to reflect on the philosophical concept of freedom * you asked them to relate the poem to the notion of freedom in their own lives and the students responded by sharing their ideas with the rest of the class * is this kind of extension something you always do/

TEACHER: definitely!

INTERVIEWER: and why do you do that/

TEACHER: because you can't eliminate the personal from the poetic * poetry is perhaps the most personal of art forms and we're dealing here with personal feelings personal concepts and poetry is communication between persons and I feel that we often ignore this personal element * poetry is not the conveying of objective knowledge * it is subjective * it starts as subjective knowledge * obviously it does refer to real experiences inside and outside people but you cannot absolutely ignore the commitment the personal commitment that went into the poem the vision that informed its use of words and the reader's or listener's engagement with those feelings with those personal commitments * because it's a two way commitment * it's the poet's commitment to language and to people and obviously the commitment of the reader or the listener to the poet * so it is a personal kind of conversation * silent in the case of the reader but active and I want that kind of active commitment in readers or listeners of poetry because that is what makes the artistic happening * I try to stress with my students that poetry is so intimate that it makes you enter imaginatively states of mind and emotions that you would not normally thought to have experienced and to do that you have to be open * personally open and you commit yourself in reading to the poet's vision

INTERVIEWER: what method do you use during a tutorial devoted to the literary criticism of a poem/

TEACHER: well obviously in a tutorial I would listen or read the essays of the students bringing out the insights and the blindnesses of their comments obviously suggesting alternative interpretations * because of the time limit I usually can't listen to all the students * afterwards anyway I collect all the essays and I have to read them again but towards the end of the hour what I do is I give again a general kind of overview of what we have found or discovered together because students do sometimes make me aware of things which I missed * so what I do is I sum up I give them a kind of summing up of what we have discovered together in the poem during that hour

INTERVIEWER: are there any changes that you would like to make to the way you teach poetry/

TEACHER: I don't think there are any particularly great changes * I've used this method for years and it has worked and I can imagine other helps or tools such as recorded poetry visual perhaps but always the priority should go to words read and listened and I would not allow other means to interfere with this kind of first priority

* that we should try to help students to appreciate this particular unique use of language

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about some innovations now * should students be provided with the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

TEACHER: no! because poetry is not something written to order or to be examined * either it's something which you discover in yourself and not just the appreciation of poetry but also the capacity to write poetry * that is not something that can be taught * it can be imitated but once someone realises that he is not a poet he would stop but it cannot be taught or much less examined * I don't agree at all with this kind of idea that students should be taught poetry * and then obviously it's unfair because those who have an aptitude for poetry will have an advantage on those that do not * no! what should be examined is I think the skills which one needs to develop to appreciate poetry more those can be examined to a certain extent * but the idea of examining students in their ability to write poetry is totally erratic mistaken

INTERVIEWER: how about teaching them to write poetry without perhaps an assessment in mind/

TEACHER: that's different * again teaching I don't even think you can teach anyone to write poetry * what you can do is encourage but encourage not in a kind of taught form * encourage in the sense of providing them with occasions those who want to express themselves about a subject and to assess the capacities * because if you have it in you to write poetry then you can develop the skill as most poets do comparing their early to their later poetry you can see that the skill can grow but if you don't have it in the first place it's I think useless * I have nothing against helping students to discover for example that they do have a skill that they do have a talent for writing poetry but I don't expect the majority to have it

INTERVIEWER: does literary theory have a part to play in the teaching of poetry/

TEACHER: to a very limited extent * at this level I think literary theory should have a very limited scope in the teaching of poetry because I don't think they are cognitively and intellectually ready for it * it involves a level of abstraction which our students at sixteen for most of them anyway is inaccessible * we know that postmodern literary theory it's not exactly an easy subject and I wouldn't want that to spoil their approach by disheartening them by discouraging them from enjoying poetry

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea of allowing students to experience poetry by means of other media not just the printed page/

TEACHER: I've already said something about that * it could be a help unquestionably for instance I'm thinking of let's say the use of Owen's poetry by Benjamin Britten * that could be a help but not too much of it because classical music is not everybody's cup of tea * again there might be poetry in their own kind of cultural format ** modern music some lyrics for example which are poetical not simply popular * certain songs * I'm thinking of Leonard Cohen for instance or Bob Dylan where you do get genuine poetry genuine attention to the use of language I think that can be used * but again these are just supplements

INTERVIEWER: do you access poetry resources online/

TEACHER: yes

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: because sometimes I come across good poems which I think are accessible and of interest to my students and I do use them occasionally

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about assessing poetry * what do you ask your students to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

TEACHER: I tell them first of all not to concentrate only on the ideas the theme because that's the tendency * I draw their attention constantly to the need to concentrate on Owen's language the way it's conveying the theme * what makes his poetry so powerful more powerful than that of other war poets * what gives Owen's poetry a special unique quality * the kind of images he uses * the use of half rhyme * the passion of the words * the striking use for instance of shock tactics in his poems * I would make them concentrate on the how and why as distinct from the what

INTERVIEWER: and what do you ask your students to do when writing a literary criticism essay on an unseen poem/

TEACHER: well you can give them a kind of general formula but I don't want to restrict excessively their approach to a poem * usually I do suggest a kind of critical essay format but I tell them that they don't have to follow it and that they can and should adapt it * what I recommend is usually in poetry obviously to first write about the theme a few words about the subject of the poem and then to discuss how the subject is developed how the subject grows how it's treated what angle does the poet approach it from the conclusions he reaches etcetera * and then comes the main body of the essay which is obviously close analysis of the language being used and this I

tell them to approach in various ways * for example I tell them that they can focus in one paragraph on the use of the images in another on the use of sounds or on the use of contrasts or on the structure of the poem * they have to go into all that * the details the poetic techniques being used plus obviously their effect * why and how are they being used in that particular line or stanza or whatever * this should take them most of the essay and I also recommend that they end with a personal evaluation * I insist on this because although you get prescribed rules that you should not express your personal opinion I think that is simply ridiculous * you should express your personal opinion what you liked what you disliked what you found most remarkable about this poem what struck you what stood out for you * in what way has it changed or modified your view of the subject * as I do expect especially towards the end of the essay perhaps even in the conclusion that the students should express their personal engagement with the text

INTERVIEWER: in fact my next question is about that * personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually encourage students to include their personal response in their essays about poetry/ you've already said that you do

TEACHER: definitely! definitely! * and I already gave most of the reasons * because poetry is a personal thing * it's a personal happening for the poet and for his reader and it's ridiculous to put aside this kind of personal take on a text * personal does not mean simply subjective * it can be also objective in the sense that it does get to what the poet is trying to convey * there is therefore an objective element depending obviously on the competence and sensitivity of the reader or the listener but it is a fact that the more you put in poetry the more you get out

INTERVIEWER: currently MATSEC assesses poetry by means of an essay * what do you think about this/

TEACHER: I always * I've always had a great respect for the essay form * I think it's the most challenging and perhaps the most creative way of responding to literary texts * there are easier ways perhaps guided questions coursework but finally in the end you really need to assess a student's capacity to appreciate a literary text in the essay form * the other methods can be used but ultimately especially for reasons of assessment and examination the essay form is the most creative perhaps the freest kind of way of allowing the student to engage with the text

INTERVIEWER: are there any changes that you would like to see to the way poetry is being assessed/

TEACHER: ** I don't think there should be long poems set for an exam * that's the first thing because obviously of time restraints * secondly the choice of poems should be careful very careful by the examiner * and he should consider the age group he is examining * thirdly I think a poem that needs some kind of background information even a minimum in order to help students understand or enter * you need to give students a point of entry into the poem * I think it should be included * in the past I think students were mishandled by being given texts which only a reader of that poet would have immediately grasped * so basic biographical or situational information if necessary should be included * otherwise I think we're demanding too much of our students

INTERVIEWER: a question on training * do you think we should be provided with training on how to teach and assess poetry/

TEACHER: ** yes * I think training helps but ultimately it is the teacher's own appreciation of poetry that counts most * you do get lecturers who have to teach poetry and it does not interest them and I don't think training can increase their interest or in any way make their teaching substantially more effective * I think by all means it would improve somewhat their rendering in seminars or poetry classes but again I repeat it is personal interest experience and a poetic sensibility without necessarily being a poet that is the ingredient which is important in teaching poetry

INTERVIEWER: now one final thing * I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

TEACHER: yes obviously not quite * I wouldn't say that you have to torture a poem or accustom students to torture a poem to squeeze meaning out of it * some people do obviously ** they have this kind of fetish of showing or inculcating into their students the idea that a poem contains a message or a moral * that is true but ultimately it's what I said earlier the poetry lecture or lesson should be a kind of rediscovery of the poet's state of being when he wrote the poem enriched or modified by your own experience * and I go back to what I started with that poetry studies should start and end with the love of words * if I manage to increase or improve or enhance the sensitivity of my students to language to words to the many significances

to the sounds to the force the energy that words contain * I think that would be enough for me without striving to squeeze meaning out of poetry

INTERVIEWER: do you identify with the speaker in this poem/

TEACHER: partly yes * you can kill a poem obviously in class by a rigid formulaic kind of approach to it but if you encourage your students to feel the words to enter the poem with attention * this is the key word attention * because the poetic sensibility * now whether you're a poet or not doesn't matter * the poetic sensibility is based on attention being attentive * sometimes I tell my students poetry reading is reading in slow motion * critical reading * reading in slow motion and obviously the more you practise it the better you're at it and reading a poem and appreciating the state of being that produced and how it impacted your own sensibility * that's the whole purpose * I've read a poem and it showed me something about life and myself and others which I wasn't aware of in that way

INTERVIEWER: and do your students ultimately manage to adopt that attitude or do they tie the poem to a chair and beat it with a hose trying to extract meaning out of it/

TEACHER: obviously the first impulse is to do that but although MacLeish was it who said that a poem should mean but be * OK that's a generalisation * it has its truth but it's not it shouldn't be taken as a kind of law in itself * there is meaning and God forbid that we should ignore meaning * things mean alright/ so there's nothing wrong with trying to be attentive to the meaning or meanings of a poem * but I repeat in poetry you get to the meanings or to the ambiguities the richness or meanings through words * and this is the primary objective in appreciating poetry * it is this type this combination of words which contains this unique instance of being and if the students go away from a poetry class feeling that the poem itself contains something that cannot be paraphrased that is a surplus meaning which goes beyond all the meanings we have discovered * if they go out with that kind of intuition or inkling I would be happy * the point is for them to realise that it is this special combination thrown together of words that constitutes the soul of the poem

INTERVIEWER: thanks a lot for this interview

Appendix 21 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Teacher D

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * the first few questions are about your own reading and teaching preferences * which component do you prefer teaching most/

TEACHER: well * at junior college I tend to prefer teaching anything related to literature * so I would say crit is one of my favourite subjects but any other lectures involving literature for example Shakespeare and Owen are often components I really enjoy preparing and teaching

INTERVIEWER: you mentioned crit * poetry prose any particular preference/

TEACHER: no there isn't a particular preference * when it comes to literary appreciation I do not have any particular preferences even in teaching * I believe that both are important both reveal different aspects of literature so I do not have a particular preference in that respect

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

TEACHER: ** well * definitely * it depends on the research I'm doing in relation to my studies tough whenever I have time I like to read novels * more than poetry * I like short stories too and I usually go for contemporary texts not necessarily by English authors * so for example I do read for instance * literature in translation * at the moment I'm reading the latest novel by Murakami * there is a tendency to go for prose when it comes to reading for personal pleasure

INTERVIEWER: and why not poetry/

TEACHER: probably because poetry requires a more intense and a more engaged reading so when I'm reading to relax I think that prose is something that you can do when you're do as it were * since most of time involves reading for work purposes when I want to relax I want something which is slightly less intense and therefore when I read for pleasure very often I read prose

INTERVIEWER: what do you understand by the term poetry/

TEACHER: ** well it's a very wide term * and it's something which changes I would say * poetry for me is a different way of presenting reality through words *

there can be different ways of doing that * it's language that requires some kind of difference in the way you see things * so it might mean seeing things which you're used to in a different light or seeing things which you've never seen before * with a special use of language * the difference between poetry and prose * there are generic issues * there are things in prose which can be called poetic because there is poetic prose and there are things in poetry which are prosaic so the distinction in that respect is a bit hazy I would say * though usually in a poem you'd expect some kind of verse some kind of greater rigidity when it comes to structure

INTERVIEWER: during your lesson you mentioned the term defamiliarisation * is that something that you see as a defining characteristic of poetry and is this something that you try to convey to your students/

TEACHER: so * no not necessarily * poetry doesn't have to be a form of defamiliarisation though it often is * I do not believe that you can define poetry a priori so what poetry should be * I believe that poetry is what it is and not what it has to be but sometimes poetry achieves a form of defamiliarisation * if that's something which the particular poet I'm dealing with brings up then it is something which I will show * actually my views about poetry are precisely that you cannot really define it a priori because once you do that you take away that which is singular in poetry and therefore that which goes beyond categorisation * that which goes beyond the conceptual and therefore that which goes beyond what might not be poetic after all but in that particular lesson I mentioned defamiliarisation because I felt at that moment defamiliarisation is the concept that best explains what is going on in that particular line

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy listening and writing poetry/

TEACHER: well I'm not a poet though I have written a few things * just once every two or three years * I'm not a poet * yeah I do like listening to poetry so sometimes when I'm interested in a poem I do find for instance online versions of the poem being read * so that's something which I enjoy and I also sometimes go to poetry readings * I cannot consider myself someone who writes poetry though because it's too rare an occasion for me to define as someone who enjoys writing poetry * I would like to be able to write poetry but the standards of what is good poetry are so high that whenever I try to write I consider it insufficient so I don't even try

INTERVIEWER: do you mostly read poetry for personal pleasure or for work purposes/

TEACHER: although I enjoy reading poetry I do read poetry mostly for work purposes * as I told you earlier when I look for something to read in my free time I go for prose * but that means that I read a lot of poetry because I have to read it for my teaching and studying

INTERVIEWER: can you name some poets whose work you enjoy reading/

TEACHER: well recently * there's a big range obviously * there are the classics * Shakespeare's sonnets * very traditional * I like the Victorians the dramatic monologues by Browning * I like Tennyson * but recently I'm reading Paul Celan * in translation obviously because I can't read German * quite an experience * very difficult poetry but unfortunately that's not something I can use during my lessons * firstly because it's in translation and mostly we're dealing with English originals * more than that the way Celan writes is not conducive to literary criticism for post-secondary purposes

INTERVIEWER: do MC English students enjoy studying poetry/

TEACHER: the only experience I have of students studying poetry here at Junior College is that of Wilfred Owen and I would say that Owen is one of the most * one of the favourite subjects that students have * very often Owen is either first or second in their list of what they like * but that could also be related to the subject matter in the sense that Owen talks about war and that's something they can identify with * when it comes to crit I always ask my students at the beginning of first year but also at the beginning of second year what their views are about literature * I always ask that in the first session and you do find a percentage of students who tell you listen I do not like literature especially first years * I like the language but that's very rare * what I actually find is that a lot of students tell me they like literature more frequently prose than poetry but that they do not necessarily like to write about it * so they might not actually like the actual activity of having to write in one hour a literary criticism essay on poetry while they do enjoy reading poetry in class * in general I would say that when I ask my students in class what they prefer poetry or prose * I don't have any statistics but the majority definitely go for prose * those who mention poetry qualify their arguments by saying listen yes but not necessarily to write a literary criticism essay about it * and the reason they often give me is because we don't believe there should be one way of writing about poetry * they have this idea that for crit there is only one right interpretation etcetera etcetera

INTERVIEWER: which students enjoy studying poetry/

TEACHER: the high achievers definitely * I think that when you find students who like reading poetry they are more often than not those who are some of the best students in class * as I said at the beginning poetry requires a more intense engagement with the language so you require effort and very often I would say * once again I don't have any statistics for this but those who read poetry in their free time are some of the best students in class * it's almost always the case and this is something which I saw also when I used to teach at secondary level * students who liked to write their own poems or read poetry were often the best at English literature

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about choice of poems * what do you think of the set text for poetry/ * what do you think of its appropriateness for students of this age and ability/

TEACHER: there are other components in the syllabus but most schools go for Wilfred Owen * Owen is a perfect A-level writer * does that mean we have to remain with that for nine ten twelve years * no! * I think one of the problems we have with Owen is that even though he's a brilliant poet for what he does because of the emphasis on war we often find ourselves in a situation where teaching poetry becomes too much of a discussion of the issue of war and not enough of what poetry is or can be * so perhaps a writer who has a wider choice of topics let's say would allow us to go into what makes poetry poetic more than we can do with Owen * with Owen and that's why I think A-level students like him the subject matter is polemic and although he does explore thoughts about other subjects there isn't variety * I would say that if I were to change this situation I'd possibly go for either having two poets rather than one with a selection of ten poems by each * I don't see why that can't be done and I would go for a greater variety in subject matter * the texts that we have at A-level tend towards the political and I think that there isn't too wide a representation of what literature can do

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism poetry seminars/

TEACHER: I do

INTERVIEWER: what do you think about this/

TEACHER: let's start with the reasoning behind what I do * what I do is select a number of poems to be covered over two which would allow me to cover what I see as the main genres in poetry and allow me to explore different aspects of poetry * I try to choose as wide a selection as possible * I've never tried to be honest to ask students to bring their own poems * the reason for that probably is that since we have

something like fifty crit lessons over two years and you have to cover both poetry and prose and every poem might take a minimum of a lesson possibly two in order to explain how you would write about it * the opportunities for doing something which would help them to do well in their exam are quite limited * it would be ideal if there was more time for students to bring in their own poems but with a class of sixteen how that would work out is something I haven't figured out yet

INTERVIEWER: do you encourage students to bring in any poems in class to discuss with their peers/ you've partly pre-empted this question

TEACHER: no I've never done that * I think it would be a good idea something which might work it might be something to experiment with though again my major concern is the problem of time in the sense that crit is the subject in which there is a clash between trying to encourage students to love the subject while at the same time being the component which students find hardest in the examination work towards building their skills for an examination * I think they would be able to benefit from bringing their own poems * I haven't yet worked out how this would work out logistically

INTERVIEWER: what kind of poems do you choose for the literary criticism seminars/

TEACHER: I have a list of poems which I've been using for some time though I update them every few years * I have a wide selection so the earliest examples are sonnets Shakespeare and something by Milton but I also do have a lot of contemporary poems * not necessarily English and American poets * I don't go for the poet I go for the kind of form itself

INTERVIEWER: so what kind of criteria do you use when choosing poetry/

TEACHER: level not too simple * although you need a few poems which are let's say more accessible than others to start with * not too simple but not too difficult * the reason for that is that if you have a poem which is too difficult it might discourage students and you don't want them to start hating the subject * I choose poems which I could see being chosen in the A-level examination * so we're dealing here with twenty twenty five poems over two years not more than that * also for manageability I don't go for poems which are too long * poems which are maybe thirty lines that's the limit * so they can be discussed preferably in one session but then it's variety that I look for so I look at the poems together rather than individually * I want something in which they have something that is metaphoric and something

that is narrative * I go for not necessarily a particular poem because I like it but because I see it as fitting within a range of different poems that I need to present to my students

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about the teaching of poetry * why do we teach poetry/

TEACHER: [laughs] * it's a question which is being asked more and more at the moment * why do poetry/ ** okay if you start from the very practical side of it there's an exam which we're preparing them for * an examination which is 66% based on literature 33% based on language * so one very practical reason is to help them pass the examination * though I believe that if you're doing a language then maybe at a certain level in order to be able to take on your understanding further you have to see where that language is being stretched where that language is being used creatively in order for you to understand the working of the language so from a purely linguistic side * but also I think there is a value in literature which goes beyond the teaching of language itself * I believe that poetry like other forms of literature allows the individual to see the world differently to see the world from the point of view of others to explore aspects of imagination which otherwise wouldn't be explored * though I would say if I had to justify poetry's place in the A-level I would say that in order for a language to be engaged with at a certain level it has to be understood also when it is being used creatively

INTERVIEWER: should we continue teaching poetry in this day and age/

TEACHER: yes! I think so * obviously a lot of people are asking that or are taking the mentality of quantifying the humanities * so even if for instance you're applying for a scholarship or grants or if you have a project you're often asked to show what practical outcomes usually quantifiable in terms of numbers would come out of your project * I see poetry in many ways as being similar to philosophy in this respect although philosophy is much more interested in concepts than in language as such * but aspects of human life which are not necessarily quantifiable but which define human life * so I don't believe in a very instrumental in a completely instrumental view of education where you teach what will get you money later * there is a value in poetry * that is something I believe and I also believe that even students who do not love poetry get a lot out of poetry both in terms of language and also in terms of discovering new things about themselves and the world around them

INTERVIEWER: what do you give most importance to when teaching poetry/

TEACHER: ** one of the things that I start with is that I tell them listen what we do at A-level when it comes to poetry is mostly based on the New Critics * the idea that the language and the thought the language and the subject are one * therefore when I teach poetry that is the view of poetry that I try to project * so I always tell my students how form is content and content is form * so we never just focus on what the poem is about or how it is written but we try to bring them together though I always tell my students that this is one way of looking at poetry which is determined by the fact that the poetry component in the A-level which they are going to be answering is based on this vision * though if let's say poetry suddenly became different and it allowed for a political or theoretical interpretation then I would adapt my methods though I do feel that out of all the different ways of looking at poetry the New Critical perspective is perhaps the most appropriate for A-level students

INTERVIEWER: what approach do you use when teaching Wilfred Owen's poetry/

TEACHER: a lot of lecturers I speak to tell me that when they have twenty five lessons in a year on Owen they spend the first five for instance introducing Owen's life war showing them documentaries * I confess that I do very little of that * I take one lesson to contextualise and then I immediately get to the poems * I like to teach poetry through almost obsessive close reading so after I read the poem once in class we go through the poem line by line word by word and we try to see the connotations the implications the connections within the poem * I really believe in close reading * if the essence of poetry is a different way of presenting the world it's not just the concepts which are important otherwise what's the difference between Owen speaking about war and me speaking about war * so I really believe in intensive close reading

INTERVIEWER: and what approach do you use when teaching literary criticism based on poetry/

TEACHER: pretty much the same although I do a lot of eliciting * even in Owen I do try to make my students answer my questions rather than simply listening to what I'm saying about the poem * I do it much more in crit * in fact in crit I ask plenty of questions * I tell my students in the first few lessons * I can't teach you crit I can only help you learn how to do it * I really believe that crit is all about asking the right questions so what I do is I ask and I ask but there are also lessons during the year where I tell my students listen I'm going to be the student and you're going to ask me questions about the poem * then in the second half of the year I start going into

writing obviously because that's what they do in the exam * so then I start working on how to integrate what you learn about a poem into writing * but in terms of the analysis I base my lessons on asking questions

INTERVIEWER: at one point during the lesson you told the class that crit isn't about discovering a hidden meaning * could you elaborate on this/

TEACHER: yes * okay this comes from some of the misconceptions that students might have about poetry and some of the thoughts which make them go in the wrong direction * a lot of students perhaps because of the way they are taught in secondary school believe that the key to a good critical appreciation is discovering what lies beneath the words so they look at the poem as if they have to decipher a hidden code which will tell them what the poem is about * now poetry sometimes does that in allegory but that's very rare * what I try to emphasise when telling them that poetry is not about hidden meanings is that the language of them poem cannot be forgotten in trying to find some kind of hidden treasure * the language is the poem so what they have to look at are the words of the poem not some kind of paraphrase or some kind of summary of the text * and that's why I said earlier that with Owen there might be that danger * the danger where because of the obsessive interest in war in his poems there might be a situation where students forget that what they are doing is ultimately a poetic presentation of war rather than just a discussion of war

INTERVIEWER: you repeatedly told the students that poetry isn't only about meaning but it is also about experience and feelings * what do you mean by this/

TEACHER: okay this is good ** sort of it's quite clear there that sort of my views of poetry come across quite clearly * I do not believe that poetry is simply the concept that might be there * if it were simply the concepts then why do poetry * why for instance not simply study summaries of what a poem is about * so I believe that the reading of poetry engages the reader in some kind of experience which the poet might or might not have shared * it might be an artificial creation * a certain kind of intensity a certain kind of experience which goes beyond an idea * ideas are important themes are important concepts are important * but so is the experience and so is the language * what I was doing wasn't simply telling them meaning is unimportant but that it is not the only thing * I'm not sure whether this is something which has to do with their age but a lot of students tend to at that age tend to feel frustrated with an open ended poem because they want to see what the poem meant what the idea is * that's why I repeat it very often * I try to tell my students that

poetry is in the experience and not necessarily in the meaning * that's what I mean by it

INTERVIEWER: during the lesson you seemed to focus quite a lot on the linguistic aspect of the poem * is there a particular reason for this/

TEACHER: ** as I said earlier since poetry is not simply the concepts that it might or might not convey then what we have to look for are the words of the poem * poetry is ultimately an oral art form * even in the way it is it is meant to be heard * it's not necessarily meant to be understood * now you hear it through the language and therefore a sensitivity towards the language is therefore I believe fundamental in being able to understand poetry and this links also to what we said earlier * poetry requires a more intense kind of reading because it's not just what the poet is trying to say but how it's being said

INTERVIEWER: what method do you use during a tutorial devoted to poetry/

TEACHER: what I find during the tutorial is that I often find myself having to in many ways fill what I perceive as gaps mainly in the writing about literature * why/ a tutorial is often conducted in the form of essays being corrected by the teacher so I feel that my responsibility is to do that * the system I use is that they bring their essays I select a number of students usually not more than three during one tutorial * they read out their work * I have a copy in front of me and I comment on the way they are writing * that allows me to bring up issues related to the particular poem but I find that since they have five poetry crit lessons a year and I'm the tutor I'm the one who is responsible for their writing in the tutorial I give much more importance to how to write about poetry than how to analyse poetry * I tend to focus on writing

INTERVIEWER: are there any changes that you would like to make to the way you teach poetry/

TEACHER: to the way I teach/ ** I think that the way I teach poetry is built on the exam and it's also built on the time restrictions that we have * if I had the equipment and I believe the department will get it soon what I would maybe change are the lessons on how to write about poetry * usually what I do is we go through a poem together and then discuss our ideas and start to write * I usually present a model of the essay which I write there and then in class * if I had let's say a board which allows me to show corrections and possibly the students would connect with that that would allow me to teach writing about poetry in a much more individual way * what was suggested earlier of students bringing poems to class could possibly work * that

would give them a greater sense of entitlement perhaps * being able to choose their own poems * that's something which might be explored

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about innovations * should students be provided with the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

TEACHER: ** no to be honest no * let me tell you why * teaching it there's nothing wrong with that in fact it's something which can be very valuable * because in trying to write poetry you're coming face to face with what poetry is * so in trying to do it you're learning more about what it is * I am afraid that it might be unfair at this stage to assess students on their poetry writing because I believe that not everyone is born a poet * obviously some people might argue differently * that you can teach someone how to become a poet * I don't actually believe in that * it would create I think a situation in which those who have the skill artistic skills are being rewarded for their artistic skills when what we're assessing is their understand of literature and their proficiency in language * whether poetry writing could be used in the teaching of writing is another matter * I think yes it would be a very good idea it's something to consider though I'm not sure about assessment * I'm not sure about assessment

INTERVIEWER: does literary theory have a part to play in the teaching of poetry/

TEACHER: the foundations * I mean what you need at this level are the foundations * you do not need to be an expert in Marxism feminism post structuralism all that * a basic grounding in practical criticism is sufficient * also because a lot of lecturers here have been educated at a time where literary theory wasn't even taught at university * they did a course which was based on New Criticism and things like that * so no I don't think you need literary theory however it does change and determine the way you look at things and it can help but it's not a necessary requirement for a lecturer no

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea of allowing students to experience poetry by means of other media not just the printed page/

TEACHER: I think it's not only important but essential but again * the reason why it's essential is that this is the digital age and one of the things that the internet is bringing is the fact that word can no longer be seen in isolation because the internet is bringing in a medium where you have a moving image you have sound and you have the word and all are integrated * so eventually even in debates on the future of literature we find that the internet is going to affect the essence of literature * I'm not sure however that at Junior College we have the necessary resources to be able to

approach poetry differently ** if I were to do that * if I were to bring in the digital element in literature I'd need a room with curtains you'd need a screen and you can't be in a situation where you have to book three months in advance just to have one lesson * so unless we have the resources I do not see myself changing the structure of my course to do that * if the resources were available then that would be a different matter

INTERVIEWER: do you access poetry resources online/

TEACHER: yes a lot yes

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: well obviously when I'm researching poems both to present them to my students but also for my own personal interest there are a number of excellent resources which give you a great range of contemporary poems so it's a very easy way of seeing whether you like a poet's work * it allows you to keep up to date with what's going on and with teaching ideas * I do read a lot of poetry online to use in class but also for my personal interest

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about assessing poetry * what do you ask your students to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

TEACHER: on Wilfred Owen * okay I tell them there are three elements I'm going to look for * one is accuracy of language * two their understanding of literary techniques but also the themes present in Owen * so how relevant their answer is to the question set and thirdly what I call critical know how * so their ability to quote and their ability to use evidence to back up their arguments their ability to use the right technical terms * I often divide the marks into these three components and I believe that everyone of them is essential in order to get a good grade

INTERVIEWER: and what do you ask your students to do when writing a literary criticism essay on an unseen poem/

TEACHER: here what I do here is I tell listen what I want to get from you is an essay which shows an ability to understand how language in the poem reflects or is essential in the creation of the poem itself in relation to its meaning * I do not often insist on a pre-established structure for the essay here unlike in Owen essays where you need a clear text organisation because I tell them the structure of your crit should be based on what the poem seems to be suggesting * so a poem which is very heavy on theme should have definitely a good paragraph on theme but you might have a poem where the essential thing is in the language * so I'm not very rigid on what

should be done in every single paragraph of the essay but I also tell them in poetry crit you have the text in front of you and so you have to refer closely to the text * that's different from other components in the examination * it's the only component where they have the text in front of them so the text has to be their major consideration

INTERVIEWER: personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually encourage students to include their personal response in their essays about poetry/

TEACHER: I tell them that their essay is the personal response but I discourage phrases like I like this poem because it reminds me of my childhood * if what interests you in a poem is the fact that it deals with childhood then I think that and you're already focusing on that then that's already your personal response * so it's not that I tell them not to respond to the poem * far from it * I tell them that every essay is a response to the poem * when it comes to writing about it I think that the major topic of the essay though this might be old fashioned the major topic is the poem * the response is in the response to the poem so I would not encourage going off a tangent by for instance speaking about what the poem makes you think of * I know that the new syllabus can be open to interpretation in that it allows this kind of response but I don't teach it * I'm teaching poetry criticism and therefore my major subject is the poem itself rather than other things which the poem might make me think of

INTERVIEWER: currently MATSEC assesses poetry by means of an essay * what do you think about this/

TEACHER: it might not be the best option here * the time restriction is really a huge problem for students * it's very very difficult * I tell my students to spend at least twenty to twenty five minutes reading the poem before starting to write and they only have thirty five minutes left and they have four hundred words * perhaps I would go for a series of two or three shorter questions * the essay form is problematic because it forces students not only to think about how to engage with the poem but also about how to structure this in the form of an essay and I think that skill is being tested in almost all the other components * the essay writing aspect of it * if we're testing poetry response here their ability to appreciate poetry then the time restriction of only one hour for a poem that they've never seen before and the restriction of putting this

into the form of a well-structured essay may be too much * so it might be a better idea to have let's say three or four questions and students are asked to answer two or three of them * for instance you might be asked to comment on what you feel are the essential themes of the poem * possibly to bring evidence from the text to supplement that * or there might be questions which are directed at this particular poem * for examples questions on figures of speech

INTERVIEWER: are there any other changes that you would like to see to the way poetry is being assessed/

TEACHER: I think that the O-level the SEC with the short questions is the way it should be probably * I think that you cannot ask for an essay there * with the A-level I think I'd go for guided questions * what I wouldn't want however is to have a list of questions which come out every year because students can then prepare an answer and then just add that bit to the particular poem * so guided questions * so for instance you have a poem by Owen which they've never seen before and they would have a question on sound devices or a question on what they see as theme * so guided questions that's what I would do

INTERVIEWER: a question on training * would you like us to be provided with training on how to teach and assess poetry/

TEACHER: I don't believe that everyone needs it in the same way * obviously training helps you to see what others are thinking and improving * if you look at the contemporary situation that is now 2011 because of the changes in the syllabus what we definitely need is * before training * some kind of workshop where we actually come to terms with what the actual syllabus changes mean * training is essential in everything but not everyone needs it in the same way though it's important to know what the others think what the others are doing * I personally feel that I would enjoy seeing what others do in their lessons but I'm not sure that people can be convinced to all work in the same way in class * though sharing ideas is always important

INTERVIEWER: I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

TEACHER: [laughs] it fits very well obviously with what I've been saying * this line where I want them to waterski across the surface of a poem waving at the author's name on the shore but all they want to do is tie the poem to a chair and torture a confession out of it I think it fits very well with what I was saying earlier

INTERVIEWER: is that what most students do/

TEACHER: they think that this is what they're supposed to do and that might have to do not necessarily with the students themselves but with the way they are taught * I suspect that poetry at lower levels is often taught in the form of the lesson we learn from the poem * I do believe that this is reflected in the conclusion that they write where they try to come up with the moral * and so I often tell them this is not a sermon the poet is not a priest * it might have to do with the Maltese obsession with giving a moral value to everything including art * I share this experience completely actually [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: thanks a lot for the interview

Appendix 22 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Teacher E

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * the first few questions are about your own reading and teaching preferences * which component do you prefer teaching most/

TEACHER: ** well I enjoy teaching literature mostly so it's criticism novels poetry * I've had diverse reading interests for the good part of twenty years now so I guess it's a continuation of that I suppose

INTERVIEWER: do you prefer the literary criticism of prose or poetry in particular/

TEACHER: as long as the students are responding in an appreciative way to the text it doesn't make a difference * it's usually the dynamic of communication that I look for in class * I always see a student's ability to communicate in class will allow him to get through his ideas in an examination essay * so I feel that whether it's a prose passage or a poem getting the students to communicate their arguments to me actually affords me to gauge their level

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

TEACHER: I read poetry in the morning and narrative in the evening [laughs] let's put it this way * I mean on a very practical level I always try to find some time most mornings to read a poem or two and then I read the lengthier stuff in the evening

INTERVIEWER: and when you say poetry do you have any particular poets in mind whose work you particularly enjoy/

TEACHER: oh yes absolutely * Paul Muldoon Don Patterson Seamus Heaney * Elizabeth Bishop if we're going back in time * Sylvia Plath Ted Hughes Langston Hughes

INTERVIEWER: and would you say that you read poetry quite frequently/

TEACHER: ** oh yes yes * for the simple reason that I'm creative writer myself so I just feel that it's a staple food * I read poetry across the board whether it's George Szirtez or Derek Walcott * Latin American poets and contemporary British and American poets too * even Australia and New Zealand and South East Asia * also because it's a comparative exercise * my mind works in a very comparative way

INTERVIEWER: and you also gauge your own work in relation to what you're reading I would imagine * yourself being a published poet

TEACHER: it's it's * I'm always interested in having my students aware that this poem they have in front of them doesn't exist in a vacuum * I think that's fundamental * I mean even with regards to the teaching of Wilfred Owen * and even when Wilfred Owen crops up in discussions of literary crit because students are working on other modules I always emphasise WH Auden and Siegfried Sassoon Rupert Brooke and so on and so forth so that a student gets as much of a holistic picture as possible

INTERVIEWER: what do you understand by the term poetry/

TEACHER: ** I always tell my students that a poem is a unit of time * I always start from that premise * it helps the student to think about poetry to think of it in terms of time and adjusting that time to the space of words and rhythms and syllables and feet and so on and so forth * it allows the student to approach the poem in a more relational way rather than attempting straight away to explore the poem's content

INTERVIEWER: you've mentioned that you enjoy reading and writing poetry * how about listening to poetry/

TEACHER: let's put it this way * I think that a very basic exercise that any creative writer does with poetry is to listen to the verses that they are producing regularly so that I think listening is both a creative exercise and a receptive exercise * I insist that my students read the poem once twice at home before we actually work on it in class but I feel comfortable reciting poetry because ultimately poetry is a very public medium at the end of the day * poetry is meant to communicate relate both in terms of relation to self and to others * I think the students do manage to relate to this kind of argument

INTERVIEWER: do you mostly read poetry for personal pleasure or for work purposes/

TEACHER: for both I would say * I am lucky that my job straddles also my very personal interest in literature and   I'm happy that my labour of love feeds into the job when it comes to writing and to reading * but of course when I'm reading a poem for the end of delivering a lecture or else having an eliciting session with the students then I would look at the poem in more pedagogical terms * but I also limit myself in that sense because I wouldn't want to impose too much on the students * if you want my pedagogical philosophy it's very basic but I think it's very rigorous * I elicit the

arguments from the students themselves in such a way that it is their intuitive skills that lead to the actual intellectual management of the poem rather than trying to impose the intellectual management on the students * I feel that throughout a year what the student will get is a series of surreptitious exercises in honing their listening skills their argumentative skills and their ability to find literary devices in a poem * but it's very much practice based very much intuition based and I feel that to rely on the students' intuition has never let me down * in most cases students relying on their intuition and on avid reading would do a great job of it

INTERVIEWER: do MC English students enjoy studying poetry/

TEACHER: ** enjoy studying poetry * well let me put it this way * I get different responses from students in different classes that I teach * when I need to be overtly pedagogical for instance when teaching poetry and metre and when teaching stylistic issues where you need to actually impart a didactic way to the students I can see that they are exercising their patience there * but when it comes to seeking intuitive readings of the poem targeted at pointing out the effect of literary devices I feel that students respond very well to that and they respond in a spontaneous way

INTERVIEWER: which students in particular enjoy studying poetry/

TEACHER: I wouldn't limit this to poetry because you see it happens across the board * I mean I can tell straight away * with your intuition as a teacher you can tell straight away which are those students who think of reading as a life long exercise and as a formative exercise and have always been taught to do so * and those students who need a bit more of a guidance and direction to achieve that * to arrive there * and there tend to be * most of my students tend to respond to the poems even if they do not actually speak out their answers but I can realise that a student is engaged with the text even if they're scratching their head as they're reading it * you can relate to the emotional structures in class

INTERVIEWER: and how do you sense this/

TEACHER: you can intuitively feel it * of course very often I ask the students outright okay are you with me so far but that is why eliciting exercises are crucial

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about choice of poems * what do you think of the set text for poetry/ * that is Wilfred Owen * what do you think of its appropriateness for students of this age and ability/

TEACHER: the set text for poetry * I'm very ambivalent regarding set texts * and I think that I'm quite comfortable at the moment with the texts that are set * in the case

of Wilfred Owen I still think that despite his morbid subject matter his work is staple for students * precisely because of his mastery of literary devices * I feel that teaching Owen can impart a lot to the students in terms of appreciating a poem * I find that they engage with it and they respond to it so I wouldn't risk saying that they would prefer something else because students have never expressed that preference in my class even when I asked them * I used to have different views on this because war is a very essentialist subject but the way in which he comments on the human condition I feel that that's something to relate to * I would be very wary of handing students the more contemporary stuff * the fact that there's a temporal distance between the writing of Owen's poems and the present day makes it somewhat more a of a smoother process for students * I wouldn't have a set of Bishop poems for instance for the students or a set of Muldoon poems at this stage because there isn't that temporal distance * also because there would be a discrepancy between the depth that they would be able to read now that may prejudice the depth that they may be able to read in five years' time * I think that with Owen they can very well find their level find their depth

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism poetry seminars/

TEACHER: I discuss with my colleagues the ones teaching literary criticism but it has to boil down to both the discussions I have with other colleagues * my own choices and also the response that I get from students * I value the response that I get from students

INTERVIEWER: do you encourage students to bring in any poems that they would like to discuss with their peers/

TEACHER: oh yes! yes yes yes

INTERVIEWER: do they actually do that/

TEACHER: yes they do point out poems that they would like to discuss in class and my benchmark at that point would be the literary devices that I want to focus on * whether these poems relate in a powerful enough way to the literary devices I want to teach so that in that case I sometimes indulge the students in that sense [laughs] but not very often * as long as I manage to cover the syllabus at the end of the day

INTERVIEWER: what kind of poems do you choose for the literary criticism seminars/ what criteria do you adopt when making your choice/

TEACHER: the basic criterion is literary devices and their effect on the text but also I try to cater for eventualities of choice in the eventual exam paper which is not

something that I can predict * I try to as much as possible run the whole gamut of possible texts so that in the little time I have at my disposal I try to expose my students to as many texts as possible and also I insist that they read at least one other text by that poet that they're working on * of course I provide online resources * I always try to foster a culture in which the poem is not restricted to the four corners of the classroom * which I feel at least with some of my students helps them to see poetry with a sense of adventure * a very well informed adventure * and I think that with a significant part of the students I succeed * it very much depends on the student's position as well but as far as my output goes they engage with the text we've been working on so far * they engage with what I call situational poems * poems that are very much focused on dissecting a concern * these go down quite well * whereas the more generic stuff the wide angled viewpoint does feel bland to students at times * and that is why they would relate more easily to a Wilfred Owen poem because his poems are situational

INTERVIEWER: a few questions about teaching of poetry * why do we teach poetry/

TEACHER: ** this is precisely the point I'm contesting here * I don't consider poetry in terms of teaching even though I go into a class to teach it * I consider poetry as the ideal means of communication between student and teacher with the end point being the student being able to not only to relate to the poem but to actually articulate that relation on paper * so I have a very ambivalent relationship with the notion of teaching it * you elicit those aspects that a poem is suggesting those shades of meaning the connotations * I feel that the most important aspect of my teaching is to communicate connotation to the students

INTERVIEWER: some people say that poetry has no place on the A-level syllabus that we shouldn't teach it * what do you think about this/

TEACHER: no I would get very worked up speaking as a poet myself on an egotistical level if poetry should be removed from the syllabus * I mean if we're working on literature if we're working on literary texts we can't not teaching poetry * it would be robbing our students of a very important experience whether or not they follow it up in the future * but when you think about it how many poetic encounters do people have in their lives/

INTERVIEWER: should we continue teaching poetry in this day and age/

TEACHER: oh yes! absolutely absolutely

TEACHER: for which reason/

INTERVIEWER: I feel that poetry is * as Robert Frost said poetry always begins with a lump in the throat * I feel that each and every student which is to say each and every human being should encounter and dissect and relate to that lump in the throat created by that particular person * and to try to understand the reasons why that lump in the throat is being created * and why that lump in the throat should be followed up * unfortunately in this day and age people do not come to encounter the experience of poetry that often * throughout our lives unfortunately * and I feel that our lessons give our students that

INTERVIEWER: what do you give most importance to when teaching poetry/

TEACHER: okay I think basically I think about this in two aspects * the sound aspect rhythm rhyme aspects of style related to sound which I feel are the building blocks of the poem * on the other hand the other aspect which I emphasise as a foundational aspect of relating to poetry is connotation so that * the raison d'être of poetry is connotation * how shall I say/ in a situation in which we are constantly steamrolled into meaning I feel that poetry resists that so that the whole notion of poetry resisting meaning is something that the students get very excited about * resistance of meaning and therefore connotation * so that is my point of departure then there is the whole gamut of devices explanations and so on * I always mention the layered aspect of life * how is poetry an intrinsic representation of the layered aspect of life * okay I'm complicating the discourse here but I speak about the word connotation in most classes I give * but students always need to be herded or guided to the subject matter at hand through the resistance of meaning of the poem

INTERVIEWER: what approach do you use when teaching Wilfred Owen's poetry/

TEACHER: ** with Wilfred Owen classes there needs to be a focus on Owen's concerns and sometimes I ask this of my students what was Owen concerned about when he was writing these poems and this poem in particular/ and I think with Owen without of course contradicting the eminent teachers who have been teaching Owen for a while * but with Owen I feel there is an underlying concern and then there are so many motifs that emerge out of his poetry * so I tend to focus on a concern and then the motifs that are related to it but I also explore the whole wealth of rhythmic patterns in his poetry

INTERVIEWER: and what approach do you use when teaching the literary criticism of poetry/

TEACHER: ** well I would call it an inductive approach * how you proceed in a structured way * how you proceed to write your exam essay in a structured way to move from the effect of one literary device to another to the holistic effect of the poem without creating a storyline about the poem * so while we're starting off from the essence of the poem the shades of meaning of the choices made in the poem

INTERVIEWER: during the observed lesson you focused quite a lot on the metrical aspect of the poem in question * any particular reason for that/

TEACHER: it's simply because in the case of Thomas Hardy's 'Voice' you have one of the most eminent manifestations of the usage of rhythmic patterns * so that in that particular lecture I was interested in starting off the debate on metre and rhythmic patterns

INTERVIEWER: and do you give this a lot of importance/

TEACHER: yes because I feel that if I'm going to guide my students as to how they elicit the rhythmic pattern from a poem I want to elicit it from them * because that's what they will actually be doing in their A-level exam

INTERVIEWER: during the lesson you constantly asked students questions * is this something you always do and could you explain why you do it/

TEACHER: I do have lectures where I purposely go for an eliciting session because I feel that based on my experience as a student and as a student of literature for fifteen years * when I'm actively discussing a particular text that will just sharpen my intellectual exercise * if the students are relating silently to the poem which has never been meant as a silent medium anyway I feel that they will not maximise their ability to criticise so when they are vocally and I encourage vocal critique of the poem in front of the class * possibly vociferous critique of the poem in front of the class * I feel that that is the best way in which to instil a sense of confidence in the writing then so that with an eliciting session I'm interested in practising their productive skills when reading the poem

INTERVIEWER: at one point during the lesson you told students that they were meant to be sharpening their understanding of the underlying concern of the poem * you also referred to the metaphor of the onion * could you elaborate on this/

TEACHER: okay so one very effective way I find of teaching poetry is to actually consider the poem as a layered medium * and to make my students aware if they have a question in the exam about tone or theme they should always be able to see the shadow argument behind the poem * I always insist on this at least the question

should be asked * is there a deeper layer to this that I am not apparently seeing on the surface/ so I encourage students to go beyond surface reading * I feel that this is a staple point of view whether you are a student or a high powered post doctoral critic * the ability to dissect to dig deeper

INTERVIEWER: what method do you use during a tutorial devoted to poetry/

TEACHER: we read the poem * we read it twice and I read it with them as if it were exam conditions * I feel this is very important * and then basically I go for a dissection of each essay * so students read their essay * I encourage freedom of expression as it were when reading the essay and most students are very happy to read their essay * and then a discussion follows if we have the time because time is limited * but if I have ten minutes on my hands I try to pass on those aspects which have been elided or skimmed over in their essays

INTERVIEWER: are there any changes that you would like to make to the way you teach poetry/

TEACHER: I can only speak about what I'd like to keep [laughs] with regards to changes * I mean there's always space for thinking up different teaching strategies * that is very fine that is very fruitful especially when discussing with my colleagues and I discover different ways that other teachers teach * I think that is very important * I do get very often very useful ideas which are useful for the students themselves * but if by change you want to mean constantly revising one's way of teaching * I do constantly revise my teaching but revising not in the sense of dumping one attitude and adopting a different pedagogy or anything of the sort but just being vigilant to teaching exercises which are perhaps more effective to what you've been teaching so far * and most importantly and I feel passionately about this * students can tell straight away if their teacher is relating to the subject if their teacher is relating to the poem or not and I feel that when you create that effective dynamic in class then you will get the best possible critique out of the students * my students' critique improves over the course of a few months only because they can feel that I'm passionate about what I'm reading to them * then that creates a sense of solidarity * so it is not just myself as a student who has to read this poem * I can see that my teacher is very interested in this poem * I can understand that for some teachers they might be teaching a poem that they've read a hundred and twenty times in their lives and they don't feel like reading another one * so it's a process of rediscovery * constantly rediscovering your passions in an area * so I feel that beyond all the pedagogical

outfit which I feel is very important * it's a question of attitude it's a question of imparting a sense of solidarity when teaching poetry * that literature is not excess baggage that literature affects us it moves us in every possible way

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about some innovations * should students be provided with the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

TEACHER: I think they should be offered the opportunity yes * that would be a good idea I think

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: I think it would be an optional * I do not draft the syllabus so this is a layman's view but I feel that a creative component would benefit the students

INTERVIEWER: how would it contribute/

TEACHER: ** it would contribute by way of having the students empathise with the act of writing itself * which I think is crucial * when I hear people speaking about students as not engaging with the text as not being interested in the text I feel that it is all coming from a lack of empathy with the job of writing itself * so that you cannot analyse the poem as a fisherman would analyse a Mercedes Benz * it just doesn't work * or it is more difficult for the teacher to pull off that interest in the poetry * so what I'm saying basically is that actually writing creatively helps students to empathise with the poem itself * have I told you about the cathedral example

INTERVIEWER: no

TEACHER: so I sometimes tell my students that if you're in a cathedral and you walk around it and you see the stained glass those nuances of shape and colour * you can appreciate that whole experience * if you go outside the church and look again at the stained glass windows you'll see nothing * it's all about empathy * it's all about reading the work from the inside * I think a creative component would allow students to do that * and also having taught poetry elsewhere and having taught creative writing students doing critiques of poetry and this was a case where I had the same group * so I was working with creative writing and poetry criticism in the same group and you realise how those people who are writing creatively have better skills at reading poetry

INTERVIEWER: does literary theory have a part to play in the teaching of poetry/

TEACHER: ** no * no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

TEACHER: if you're speaking of top heavy new French criticism and stuff like that * you see I sympathise with the literary devices approach to literary crit * I think that students find that already engaging enough and sometimes they find it pretty difficult as well so I wouldn't complicate matters further

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea of allowing students to experience poetry by means of other media not just the printed page/

TEACHER: very ambivalent about this * nothing should be a substitute for reading for the simple reason that reading is very non intrusive whereas I tend to find the digital media to be intrusive * because if you are staging a poem on a YouTube clip you are basically imposing some form of meaning on that poem inevitably * whereas I feel that the written text remains the most non-intrusive * it's just live and let live * it's printed there * but then of course there is the hitch because students tend to be taken in by something kind of more flowery something more engaging * but again that speaks for some basic difficulties we are facing today because if the students are * I hope not * if some students would think of replacing a reading of *Othello* by a film adaptation * sometimes I'm scared that there is that culture * that there is that subculture * the notion of downloading a text for instance or the notion of reading a text on your iPod * so I think as teachers we should stamp our foot down on that one and say nothing can replace the written text on a book * maybe I'm being conservative but this is my point of view so far

INTERVIEWER: do you access poetry resources online/

TEACHER: yes yes yes

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: ** I feel that on a very basic level if you point your students towards a particular website where the poems are available you have a much better chance to actually get them to consult that poem whereas if you suggest a book down at the library you might not have the chance of an ice-cream in hell [laughs] okay some students do but yes referring students to online poetry resources is something that I do actively * this might be contradicting my previous answer but that's the reality and I find that the serious poetry websites are grist to my mill during a lecture * I can actually refer students to particular resources * so yeah why not/

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about assessing poetry * what do you ask your students to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

TEACHER: *** in such a poem as Owen's which is based very much on imagery and on the raw impact of imagery on the reader that's where I start off with the students * how is imagery impacting on your consciousness as a reader * so that is my starting point * so the rude impact of imagery and then work yourselves backwards from there * literally advance backwards into the poem * try to unearth the reasons behind the imagery and the concerns behind the reasons behind the imagery

INTERVIEWER: and how about when students are asked to write a literary criticism essay on an unseen poem/

TEACHER: ** I mean I issue essay titles about literary devices and most importantly I feel the effect of literary devices * so I would never ask my students to discuss theme in a poem or simply to discuss the use of diction in a poem but I issue titles which ask students to discuss the effect of diction on this text * so my emphasis is very much on the effect of literary devices and very often my essays are issued to the effect show me how this poem does not paint itself into a corner * does not paint its meaning into a corner through the use of literary devices

INTERVIEWER: personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually encourage students to include their personal response in their essays about poetry/

TEACHER: I insist on a very objective approach to a poem but an objective approach that takes the reader's responses into consideration * I always tell my students if you are going to write very subjective statements about the poem you should include that in the conclusion * if you want to indulge yourself it should be in the last couple of sentences * no not the entire essay for sure and of course there's an issue with students writing in a very raw manner as to how the poem is affecting them * however you are a reader and you have to in a way objectify yourself and step back and try to think of the effect of this poem on any potential reader * so so when you ask a question you see about literary devices you also ask a question about the universality of the poem and so you need to elicit that from the students * that is the basic syllabus material * but I do encourage a very strong affective response to the poem but when actually writing an essay I insist on actually objectifying oneself and thinking about how these affective responses have to be written about in relation to the reader rather than me myself

INTERVIEWER: currently MATSEC assesses poetry by means of an essay * what do you think about this/

TEACHER: fair enough fair enough * shouldn't be otherwise * I'm also very much keen on having an anonymous poem placed there in front of the students * having said that I don't think that an hour can do justice to what the students can do

INTERVIEWER: are there any other changes that you would like to see to the way poetry is being assessed/

TEACHER: time is a major issue * I think students should be allotted one and a half hours for poetry crit

INTERVIEWER: now one question on training * do you think that we should be provided with training on how to teach and assess poetry/

TEACHER: ** training on how to teach and assess poetry * workshops by poets for example * but I wouldn't call that instruction on how to teach poetry ** I feel that workshops by poets are very important * roaming writers should be brought to speak to the students and students should be exposed to writers' writing habits and processes * for example something like *The Guardian*'s writer's blog * they have this fantastic section on the writer's room * however I don't believe that criticism should be overtly pedagogical for the simple reason that you do not want to uniformalise as it were * you do not want to conventionalise * you don't want to * that would defeat the purpose of presenting poetry to the student * you're telling your students that this text is based on connotation and connotation is very much about resisting absolute meaning * it would be very tricky to teach teachers how to teach * I find that personally that's a bit too mechanical but this is a very subjective point of view

INTERVIEWER: one final question * I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

TEACHER: I know this poem ** as I said I favour the intuitive approach * so that the point where I part company with Billy Collins is where he says that he assesses the students' response * that hasn't been my experience of poetry lessons

INTERVIEWER: would you say that students tie the poem to a chair and beat it/

TEACHER: no no no * as you could see during the lecture they were coming up with some stuff that absolutely relational rather than pinning down * they would try to tie

the poem to a chair if they're either bored or if they're not convinced of the spirit the teacher is trying to impart at that point * so that what I go for is a balance between the intuitive teaching and the necessary explanation of the devices and so forth

INTERVIEWER: do they ever look at you as a source of meaning the fount of knowledge as it were/

TEACHER: no I think students look at me as an interlocutor and I place myself there ostentatiously as an interlocutor and I would only point out those aspects that they are missing after their own analysis * so I let my students have a go at analysing the poem and then I direct their study but this would only occupy the second half of the lesson

INTERVIEWER: thanks a lot for the interview

Appendix 23 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Teacher F

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * the first few questions are about your own reading and teaching preferences * which component do you prefer teaching most/

TEACHER: ** it depends on my mood * I can't tell you I prefer this or I prefer that * I mean I like literature I don't mind language at all and even crit * really I don't have * well something I don't think I'm up to even though I should because I specialised in it is linguistics * but probably I'd teach it as well I'd adapt

INTERVIEWER: and how about poetry/

TEACHER: yes I love poetry * I love doing it because it's self-contained

INTERVIEWER: as a set text or as part of crit/

TEACHER: as part of crit * but more or less it would be the same thing * in fact I've always thought that we should give poetry to intermediates as part of their syllabus * a crit I would have said

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: because it challenges the mind * you're analysing * criticism is analysis right/ and you're analysing a text and I think it's a skill that they need for life rather than just knowing one book and maybe remembering the story later

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

TEACHER: well ** I've been recently * what have I been reading/ short stories I definitely like because they're quick to read * but this summer I read a couple of books but I can't remember * David Lodge was one of them okay humour and the other one was ** ah yes *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* * and then I like to read other books which are not novels * I like to read self-help books and popular psychology books

INTERVIEWER: would you say that you mainly read prose/

TEACHER: yes probably I read prose * if there's any poet that I loved reading in the past though I've stopped now but I have a book of poetry next to my bed was Wordsworth

INTERVIEWER: what do you understand by the term poetry/

TEACHER: ** you don't want an erudite definition I would say but but I would say it's an * I know that probably said this * an outburst of feeling it's a rush of feeling which however after having been written it probably needs polishing * but I do believe in inspiration especially for poetry although I believe that some poets are a bit crazy [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading, listening and writing poetry/

TEACHER: writing no! even though when I was young I did try once * listening I don't think I particularly mind it although the problem is that since I've been teaching and doing poetry mostly for crit I've become too analytical I find and whenever I read a poem I don't just read it for pleasure * that's why I enjoy spiritual books and self help books * those I enjoy because I don't have to think I don't have to study them * automatically when I'm reading a poem I analyse it * I read it and read it again until I would react to the imagery and so on

INTERVIEWER: do you mostly read poetry for personal pleasure or for work purposes/

TEACHER: mostly for work purposes not for pleasure * not now in the past yes * but I'm starting to read some poetry * children's poetry * recently because of my grandson I've started to look up some children's poetry * I'm enjoying it and nursery rhymes again which I'm discovering the longer version now

INTERVIEWER: do MC English students enjoy studying poetry/

TEACHER: I think so * I should say they do eventually ** of course our students accept anything that is on the syllabus and eventually there is a sense of satisfaction when you have analysed a poem which is not always to be had when you have a text which is part of a longer piece you know like a novel * at least I feel I realise that there is that kind of feeling in my students as well * when we manage to finish it in one lesson because when it's two lessons it's harder

INTERVIEWER: which students in particular enjoy studying poetry/

TEACHER: oh yes certainly * there are people who are into writing themselves so they are interested and those engage themselves quicker than the others but then there are those whom you help to make them understand and engage themselves * certainly I think that today's students are not out there to enjoy poetry * I don't see their relationship with poetry unfortunately * at this level * maybe it shows that poetry in the past was done as a text always * we used to study it by heart and so I

don't think they come with all that fervour to do poetry but some of them especially those who put pen to paper themselves * they're yes they're interested

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about choice of poems * what do you think of the set text for poetry/ * what do you think of its appropriateness for students of this age and ability/

TEACHER: it's been there for too long now * it's alright partly because there is the historical background to it although I personally think it's too much of the same thing * I would say that * you know the themes the repetition of the themes * I think it would be boring for me as a student let's put it that way * it's interesting but we could have easily had war poets * take five four war poets and five poems each * it would have given them a wider view of the way the war was seen in those days and so on

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism poetry seminars/

TEACHER: I do

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about this/

TEACHER: I wish I had more time to tell them listen choose a poem and bring it along but unfortunately there's so much to do that you have to choose the right level * yes usually I do in general * once I did tell them bring a poem along and let me see what you've chosen but some students chose poems from *The Dragon Book of Verse* * as I told you they went home they looked up the book they had last year they didn't go online for instance * they were not interested * I remember once I did do it but only once * I told them bring a poem that you like and then you're going to tell me why you like it * of course it was a bit of a hassle because if you ask them to bring a poem then you need to read the poem and you end up not being able to do everything * so I never tried it again

INTERVIEWER: was it a successful or unsuccessful experience/

TEACHER: unsuccessful in the sense that it took too much time * because once you ask them to choose a poem you're supposed to listen to it so it took me three lessons so then of course I never tried it again

INTERVIEWER: what kind of poems do you choose for the literary criticism seminars/ what criteria do you adopt when making your choice/

TEACHER: I think my first criteria is poems I like which is a bit selfish I know ** basically that * also since we're doing * this is pedagogical here unfortunately * poems which have stuff in them but I don't always go in for poems which look like

puzzles for example not because I don't like them but because I don't want to frighten the students into thinking that poetry is always a complicated thing * so sometimes even a simple descriptive poem with literal imagery throughout * what I'm interested in is the words used you know * so I choose * the diction matters a lot not just the imagery but the diction itself okay/

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about teaching poetry * why do we teach poetry/

TEACHER: why we teach poetry/ * of course it's a very important part of literature and I would say that * even though I don't read enough poetry myself which is a pity I think * but to give you a comment I think sometimes living poets around us have given me a rather bad impression of being too * very much like Wordsworth in a way * too * like living in the clouds * I like men who are more down to earth * so even though I like Wordsworth I know he was a pantheist what do you call it/ a mystic kind of person * but I don't like those kind of people

INTERVIEWER: should we continue teaching poetry in this day and age/

TEACHER: yes yes * I think yes * simply because the appreciation of language of words * I love words * is a very valid part of learning in life * partly it's through analysis of language that you turn to analysing also fiction then * that's why probably whenever I find myself reading anything I find myself going slowly and continuously analysing because in poetry you do it all the time

INTERVIEWER: what do you give most importance to when teaching poetry/

TEACHER: themes are important but of course language above all * words! words! each and every word I tell them to stop * sometimes even a preposition matters you know * it looks stupid but even its location in a poem makes a difference * I think in a sense it's the stylistic approach * once you understand the words being used the language and that leads you to imagery as well I think you can come to the themes in a natural way* I don't start with although it's true that you ask students what is the poem about/ * but then I prefer to tackle it from the other end you know * let's see if it's about that even if they tell me this * let's see

INTERVIEWER: what approach do you use when teaching Wilfred Owen's poetry/

TEACHER: you're pressed to finish the poems in time * I think with Wilfred Owen once you've started talking about the themes and once you've done a couple of poems yourself you also start leaving something in the hands of the students to get them to tackle the poems themselves * like for example some group work and presentations * but since we have big classes and the seminars are ideal for doing

poetry * these things aren't always possible * of course in order to guide them you have to teach them about asking the proper questions * but with our classes lecturing is more of what you end up doing

INTERVIEWER: and what approach do you use when teaching the literary criticism of poetry/

TEACHER: the approach/ I change my approach * depends on the poem maybe on my mood * I always tell them read it silently first of all * sometimes I tell them share with your friends * pair work usually * what you think it's all about or something like that * depends * sometimes I ask questions as a class sometimes I group them and give a question to each group * they consider it and then eventually we put together all that they've come up with * sometimes I tell them to ask the questions of each other * it's important to question the poem no/ * what other ways have I used/ ** well I sometimes just give them a test * they just have to do it without any discussion * basically that because the message is you present the poem it's there in front of them already so it's not a question of remote preparation or that sort of thing

INTERVIEWER: during the observed lesson you made a number of references to the exam * any particular reason for that/

TEACHER: because that was the kind of poem that they might have in the exam * it's taken from a past paper actually * unfortunately I notice a difference between their experience and mine * they have this tendency to latch onto something in the poem and impose it on the whole poem * I keep telling them not to do that in the exam * they seem to forget that we're here to prepare for an unseen text in the exam * unfortunately they can't say whatever they want * I want them to express themselves but they need to keep things in perspective

INTERVIEWER: at one point during the lesson you said that the poem is not a mystery * could you elaborate/

TEACHER: yes yes * because some students have this idea that poetry is hiding something * I tell them that there's nothing hidden * all they have to do is read it carefully * that's why I don't agree with some of the poems chosen by MATSEC * sometimes they're too difficult and put students off when we're doing past papers * they get scared and ask me is this what we'll have/ you can see it in their eyes

INTERVIEWER: during the lesson you told students that they need to develop analytical skills for poetry * what do you mean by this/

TEACHER: well ** poetry requires analysis * you need to break it down and analyse what the words mean * that takes time years actually * this is difficult for students to develop * their essays are sometimes very simple * they find it hard to engage in analysis * I think crit can help students to develop a critical ability but they need to make an effort to read intensively and not latch onto the first thing they see in a poem

INTERVIEWER: what method do you use during a tutorial devoted to poetry/

TEACHER: for their tutorial they're supposed to have come prepared * sometimes they don't * so they have already written something so I usually ask questions because I don't have time to read everything they wrote * sometimes I ask them to read the introduction only because I insist on a good introduction * their task is not just appreciating poetry but writing about it which is harder for them so I believe a lot in good introductions * I don't manage to finish so I stop at the introduction but then * in other words they read it I discuss it what other words they could have used * I always believe that the introduction must be written at the end * I always tell them that * it's very hard * I never did it myself when I was a student but now I think I would * and then usually I tell them to tell me how they developed the poem * orally I don't read * very often that's how my tutorials work * because there's no time and I like to involve everyone * I hate it when one person is reading and the others seem to be sleeping

INTERVIEWER: are there any changes that you would like to make to the way you teach poetry/

TEACHER: ** to tell you the truth whenever I have an idea I've always tried it you know * sometimes it didn't work * for example making them sit in a circle * I've done this * I tell them listen I'm going to * with the seminar groups because it's a smaller group * you're going to talk * you're going to do it * I'm not going to do it * if you're not going to say anything we're going to spend a whole hour in silence and somebody says something * and a method that I've used also * after they've read a poem I tell them you're all going to pick out anything that you like in this poem one phrase * it could be a word a phrase up to one line or two * and then of course I listen to them and it doesn't matter if you've chosen something that somebody else has chosen * speak about it * it has worked * I took the idea from what is called lectio divina * something to do with bible studies * which I've been involved with and I took the idea and I think it worked well because eventually everything collates together

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about some innovations now * should students be provided with the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

TEACHER: yes it's true * writing poetry is used for TEFL usually for foreigners * we don't do it here * I don't think we have the time really * there's no harm in doing it but to tell you the truth * this is something that I have to admit this is something between poetry and myself * I have to admit that I'm not very musical myself even though I used to play the piano * and I feel my relationship with rhythm is not what it should be * I don't know I think so * and I don't like the idea of counting syllables although it's part of it so personally it would help but I think I would find it hard to teach it

INTERVIEWER: does literary theory have a part to play in the teaching of poetry/

TEACHER: basic literary theory yes * I mean if there's a poem which has a slant for example which could be treated I mean I don't know feminist criticism or something like that * why not/ deconstruction I don't like * I don't like that

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea of allowing students to experience poetry by means of other media not just the printed page/

TEACHER: ** yes unfortunately listening * this is like drama we do it on the written page and it should be heard and watched * yes I think poetry because it is for reciting and reading we should do more listening * or YouTube videos even though I would want to see the words * yes it's important although I've never done it myself * it would be good to hear people reading it * after all even now as I've told you I'm interested in nursery rhymes * when they are listened to they are nice * something comes out in them which is not seen on the page * so I think it would be valid but I don't know whether we have the time for it

INTERVIEWER: do you access poetry resources online/

TEACHER: yes I do

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: *** in order to find poems which are good for the students * sometimes to criticise what's written on some websites * because there's a lot of rubbish sometimes especially from America * yes when for example when I hear of a poet for example a poet laureate who won something and he's in the news for something * I look up what they've written and maybe I come across some poems * I don't always use them eventually

INTERVIEWER: how about online poetry teaching resources/

TEACHER: alright * when I'm planning my first year course * I did once look up * there was a page called exploding a poem I remember which I use now and then but a lot of the materials aren't suitable * the way I teach I've developed it myself * the first few lessons of the year when I teach I link poetry to the visual images and you know interpreting a picture * I refer to the arts a lot at the beginning * not music although I wish I was more musical * anyway the students wouldn't understand * I sometimes show off my little bit of knowledge of theory when I talk about feet and I explain about bars but that's all

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about assessing poetry * what do you ask your students to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

TEACHER: I don't give them any advice before writing the essay * after they've written it * I don't believe in telling them before because this is * they have to make mistakes to learn * for a tutorial I usually go prepared * if it's a poem about a particular theme or themes * or if it is stylistic * I usually go prepared with a number of points although they come up with others * I like to be organised * you know if we're talking of style you link diction and imagery together that sort of thing * I'd like to see what they know to compare it with what I know mentally and yes I am pedagogic towards them

INTERVIEWER: and what do you ask your students to do when writing a literary criticism essay on an unseen poem/

TEACHER: as I said I focus a lot on the introduction * it's more or less the same kind of teaching I do in all my classes * I tell them to focus on the introduction * the rest of it depends on the poem * I am not against a chronological approach so long as they don't make it childish * in the first stanza in the second stanza * I'm not against that at this level * I think we do sometimes exaggerate a bit * these are apprentices after all * even I myself when I was at university felt a bit uncomfortable at first doing poetry * so it depends on the poem because it's no use telling them to write a paragraph on imagery and then you run out of other ideas alright/ * the theme I give a lot of importance to the theme

INTERVIEWER: personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually encourage students to include their personal response in their essays about poetry/

TEACHER: unfortunately I don't think it's acceptable nowadays * when I myself learnt criticism at school they used to tell us write a paragraph at the end giving your reaction to poetry * to this particular poem why you like it * but you often end up with something stale or stupid ideas like I like this poem because I like horses for example * it's about a horse * so no I don't really directly tell them listen give your reaction nowadays * I tell them to tie up at the end all the ideas * to see the value of the poem as such * after all they've interpreted the poem and it is their reaction * every image that you're analysing you're automatically bringing out your personality

INTERVIEWER: currently MATSEC assesses poetry by means of an essay * what do you think about this/

TEACHER: yes I am not against it * when we used to have questions I went through that phase of having questions * it helped the students in the interpretation of the poem because the question could give you a hint on the interpretation * questions are guidelines after all and very often they had a good interpretation * nowadays some of them risk misinterpreting the poem * it's very often the case * a case in point is that tutorial poem we had last week 'Nightshift' * but I am not against it because alright you might tell me we're treating them as too mature but I believe in that * you need to challenge them

INTERVIEWER: are there any other changes that you would like to see to the way poetry is being assessed/

TEACHER: changes that I'd like to see * sometimes you become set in your ways because you get used to it * I have no idea how else I could improve * obviously time is limited * if it's a difficult poem it takes me a lot of time to figure it out let alone the students let's put it this way * if it's a challenging poem what we could do is in the rubric give them a hint * this poem is about and then write an appreciation alright * that could be an improvement * what else/ ** a portfolio of coursework would be a good idea * yes ** even asking them to find poems that they liked at school because they hardly ever read poems at home * you could tell them to create an anthology of poems they like and write commentary on each one * that would be a lovely thing * of course it's only collecting but if you ask them to justify their choice * because automatically they're doing an analysis * that's an idea but not for me for MATSEC

INTERVIEWER: one question on training * do you think that we should be provided with training on how to teach and assess poetry/

TEACHER: yes yes * in fact something else which would help * which we don't do here and I think there are people here who would be against it * is to do not just poetry readings but poetry workshops of crit amongst ourselves * sort of a kind of brainstorming and sharing ideas * not only about methods but even analysis of poetry * I remember when I was at university there was a particular book I had * the start of this book was a description of a poetry workshop * I was always impressed by that * when I came to teach of course * I still have the book but I don't remember the author * and I always used to dream that my students would be alert * that sort of thing I always looked for but unfortunately students are not always forthcoming with ideas * so yes amongst us who teach poetry * I hate the word teach but well who do poetry in class I think we could do it

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

TEACHER: I ask them to read a poem and hold it up to the light like a coloured slide * that's interesting * or press an ear against its hive * I say drop a mouse into a poem * computer technology here * see what I mean when I'm reading * slowly and automatically I start analysing * and watch him probe his way out * or walk inside the poem's room * and feel the walls for a light switch * you have all the intelligences here * visual kinaesthetic all of them aural * I want them to waterski across the surface of a poem ** waving at the author's name on the shore * not poet's name author's * I corrected that * but all they want to do is tie the poem to a chair with rope and torture a confession out of it ** they begin beating it with a hose to find out what it really means * yes! it brings in the distinction of * the pleasure of poetry as compared to the torture it says here * to the dissection of a poem in class

INTERVIEWER: do you feel that it matches your experience during a poetry lesson/

TEACHER: from their point of view they might think that I'm dissecting it too much because nowadays they often * I often try to put myself in their boots shoes whatever it is * and * unfortunately it could be that it appears that way * I try to make it not look like I'm analysing it too much * that I am enjoying it * in fact I often mention the poet * what could he have been thinking while writing you know * and it's not to teach but it's an expression of pleasure * whatever the subject is he's enjoying writing about it * he wouldn't have written it otherwise

INTERVIEWER: do they look at you as the source of meaning/ as the person who will tell them what the poem means/

TEACHER: a lot of students nowadays do see the teacher that way * yes unfortunately * I'd love them to think of me as a person who is making them enjoy poetry * even though I don't read poetry I love it * once I did decide to start reading poetry but eventually I turned to other things * as I've said I do have a poetry book but I've left it there near the bed

INTERVIEWER: why do they adopt that attitude in your opinion/

TEACHER: because our students are very practical nowadays * they are tunnel visioned * it's only about exams and whether they are given a pass mark eventually * so I'm not quite sure whether it has to do with the way poetry was treated in secondary school * I remember when I used to teach poetry to younger students ages ago it was fun * you know poetry was made to be fun * in class as well * in fact I remember making them stand up to read * read it in different ways maybe change their voices * but children enjoy such stuff * poetry at that level lends itself to such things * at this level unfortunately we're too exam oriented * it's examination * what do you call it/ washback * isn't it/ * and unfortunately yes that's what they want to do * they want to tie a poem to a chair * interesting this poem * with rope and torture a confession out of it * but as I've said I hate to think that poems are there to hide a secret * a confession * that they're a puzzle * they're not meant to be that way but some students see them that way

INTERVIEWER: thank you for participating in this interview

Appendix 24 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Teacher G

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * the first few questions are about your own reading and teaching preferences * which component do you prefer teaching most/

TEACHER: personally I prefer Shakespeare because of the theatre association and the dramatic text and because of the language * and also the fact that after so many centuries the work of this man is still very much valid today * I mean when you consider that the world has gone through so many changes and yet this man was writing in the sixteenth century and he's managed to touch the core of so many emotions that are still so valid today and regardless of the context * I find it incredible * so basically that would be my preference but also Shakespeare's poetic language and everything * so poetry and literature would also be a preference of mine

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

TEACHER: ** quite a variety * I personally look for novels contemporary novels * also works that do not only contain within them a story but also I try to find the use of language * but for personal pleasure I do prefer non-fiction material * for example biographies and so

INTERVIEWER: what do you understand by the term poetry/

TEACHER: ** that's a very difficult question to answer * because you know how * for me poetry is a kind of distillation of language * it's like when you are trying to express something that is so * that touches you so deeply and it's almost impossible to put into words but it's kind of the choice of words that a poet uses to express something so intimate you know * it's the combination of the sounds of the position of the words * it's the microscopic world of the poetry * I can't really because even within prose you would find poetic characteristics and * it's that distillation of language of emotions of words * Khalil Gibran has this beautiful quote where he says you know that poetry is wonder joy emotion with a dash of dictionary * it's this

combination use of words to express something so intimate which you would probably not be able to explain in another way

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading, listening and writing poetry/

TEACHER: I think I like the three of them * I love reading poetry and I like looking for new poetry and new poets and * you know I like poets from different parts of the world * so it's something that I like to do to read * sometimes I have written * I mean no one has seen my poetry * it think it's something so intimate that I haven't shown it except for probably my wife * but yes at times when I'm in the mood * and listening it depends on who is reading the poetry * I think you know there are some voices which lend themselves * for example there's Stephen Fry * they have to be kind of voices which are adaptable to poetry

INTERVIEWER: do you mostly read poetry for personal pleasure or for work purposes/

TEACHER: both both * I enjoy reading it because I enjoy poetry but I mean I also read it because of work and that sometimes can you know * I don't like the word spoil but it's like when you become over technical about something and you have to reduce it to a certain level you know * it's like you lose the joy of it * at the same time I love transmitting a love for poetry * but when you go over and over the same material and the reduction of it for students for them to be able to understand it * and you know that most of them are going to read this just for the exam for the purposes of the exam you know not just because they like it * but sometimes you see the journey when you're teaching poetry * some of them in the beginning do not have a clue how to approach poetry but then by the end of the second year you start to realise they're getting an affinity to the music of the words and everything * but no for both purposes

INTERVIEWER: can you name any poets whose work you particularly enjoy reading/

TEACHER: I like * Khalil Gibran * there is also Emily Bronte * I like her work the Gondal poems * Emily Dickinson * there is also * I can't remember his name at the moment the Argentinean one * he works a lot * he's got this theme of labyrinths and

INTERVIEWER: Borges

TEACHER: Borges that's it * I look for poetry that has for example Maya Angelou you know * poetry that has a certain kind of social message and also a deeper more

emotion message * I don't like you know the kind of nature poems * I prefer that intense kind of use of words

INTERVIEWER: do MC English students enjoy studying poetry/

TEACHER: ** some of them do and some of them also write poetry themselves * some of them don't realise that there's so much poetry around them that they would be listening to their iPhone and their iPod and you know and that they would be listening to poetry * certain lyrics are so poetic * in fact when I am teaching poetry * when I'm teaching literary crit sometimes I do dedicate one or two lectures especially in the first year to getting the students to bring lyrics of songs that they like * and you know photocopying it for the whole class and then looking at any use of poetic language any use of poetic techniques * listening to the lyrics listening to the song in class for them to enjoy and then at the same time working through it * because I do believe that poetry is music * the music of the words and the combination of sounds * even for example if you listen to the works of Wilfred Owen * the poet that we're doing this year * he bases so much on the use of cacophony * on the use of onomatopoeia on the use of assonance and consonance you know * I try to make them aware that poets are human beings like them * because sometimes the tendency is to see poets as these reclusive people writing away in a dark room and all they do is write about doom and gloom when in fact you know poetry is all around them

INTERVIEWER: which students in particular would you say enjoy studying poetry/

TEACHER: okay ** it's students who are able to connect with words * it's like they are not only on a literal level but they are able to reflect on things and they realise that there are different levels you know and that ultimately they are students who are able to look beyond * it doesn't mean that they are only the academic ones or the ones who are brilliant in English * you could find students who might on the outside appear as being the most kind of disinterested student but once they grasp the language they kind of come to life ** those students who write poetry themselves obviously enjoy studying poetry but * those would be the ones that if I had the time I would take a step further * because they are able to write poetry themselves and I don't think everyone is able to write poetry * that is something which is innate you are born with it * it's like when you see narrative essays you know * some students have a knack for it * you can help them improve you know technically but there are students who have a natural flair for the writing so I think even with poetry there are people who can connect with certain experiences and are able to express them

through words * those students I would take apart and take them a further step because they are able to become critical then about the choice of words about the position of words and how the poet came to that product * the process to arrive at the product itself * I find that those students need further encouragement and in fact some students do come up to me with their work and I do find the time to try * I get them over during a contact hour and we speak about and I tell them about the kind of opportunities that might exist for them to get in contact with societies that might be interested in poetry and things like that

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about choice of poems * what do you think of the set text for poetry/ * what do you think of its appropriateness for students of this age and ability/

TEACHER: alright at the moment we're studying Wilfred Owen * now with Wilfred Owen what I find is that sometimes students disconnect because of the subject matter * they can't take the vivid descriptions although nowadays with cinema being what it is with horror movies and all the blood spattering that there is * somehow they have become immune I find * it's trying to engage them with the subject matter I mean this is actually what Owen says himself you know * it's like the subject of forgetting in his poetry * so the first question that I ask before I begin lecturing is how many of you remember someone from the second world war you know * usually there's no answer * or how many of you remember of can speak about a war that is going on right now * they can superficially speak but you know how it is with stories sometimes we get lost between the words between the lines * it's like what Atwood says in *The Handmaid's Tale* you know * we become invisible the people become invisible * so when they come to connect with the subject matter I find that it's a bit beyond them * but at the same time Owen uses so many techniques and he has such a good grasp of the language and how he uses it that I find it's a good way of how to expose students to poetry rather than certain classical poetry * I'm not saying that it's not substantial and valid but the beautiful language and rhetorical language I find that students associate that with poetry and they switch off

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism poetry seminars/

TEACHER: * when I'm teaching them I usually choose the poems

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think of that/

TEACHER: ** I find it good in that I am allowed to expose the students to different poets rather than just simply being dictated by someone from the outside who might

not always be in tune with the level of the students * so usually I try to start off by trying to find simple poems in order to introduce them to the language and everything like that * and there is the book *The Language of Literature* which I find * although it might not be a on the syllabus itself I do recommend the students to get because we use parts of it because he does go into detail about certain techniques and there are certain exercise which I like to use and there are some poems which I like to use * but I tend to try and look for new poetry for the students

INTERVIEWER: do you encourage students to bring poems that they'd like to share with the rest of the class/

TEACHER: yes I do * I look at them before I actually give them to the class because you know content matter what they find on the internet might not be class appropriate * I do and I have done that I mean I have used some poetry that the students found * there are actually internet sites where students write poetry * just to show them that poets are not what I have been saying before * poets could be their age

INTERVIEWER: what kind of poems do you choose for the literary criticism seminars/ what criteria do you keep in mind when making your choice/

TEACHER: alright first of all I look at the kind of language is being used * whether it's going to be the kind of language that would reveal to the students the kind of techniques * it depends on what I am working * if for example I am working on rhythm I would choose certain poetry that would reveal kind of the rhythm * like for example if I am using * there's that poem 'Tarantella' which has that certain * so if I'm using rhythm I would use that * it depends on what I'm working on * if I'm using imagery I would use poetry that would be based on imagery * it depends on what I'm focusing on * the second year I would then go for something that is obviously their level * but also poems that would put together the different techniques that they are expected to know about

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about teaching poetry * why do we teach poetry/

TEACHER: I think that we teach poetry in order to make students aware of how language can be utilised and how language is something which is alive * language sometimes for students becomes something which is black on white you know * something which is dead which they cannot connect with * but when you are doing poetry you have to connect with the word you are forced to connect with the word in order to come in contact with what the poet might be transmitting through poetry * so I find that we teach poetry to make students aware of the beauty of the language and

also to make students aware of how language can be utilised and how sometimes we can connect with certain parts in ourselves which might not come to the fore otherwise you know

INTERVIEWER: should we continue teaching poetry in this day and age/

TEACHER: yes I do

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: because it keeps people sensitive to things that are going on around them to the language itself and it keeps people you know * they become more aware of what we use everyday * that language is not only something that we use to say hello and goodbye you know but it can be utilised to further understanding of certain things

INTERVIEWER: what do you give most importance to when teaching poetry/

TEACHER: several things I think * I give importance a lot to * the techniques being used * nowadays we are going back to this notion of * before we have gone through several phases in literature where we have been saying you know the author is dead and you can only understand a work through the language itself and everything * but know you know with certain new approaches like conceptual blending and the notion of cognitive poetics things like that * we are starting to realise that language is man made so we are going back to the idea that we have to connect with the real world * that the text itself is not simply something on paper but you have to go back to the real world and to the connection * so that is basically what I try to make students aware of * the connections between the poem and their own life and the life around them * poetry's relevance to their own life because I find if you don't identify with something and if you don't find any relevance to it then it's useless I'm trying to teach you the techniques it's useless I'm trying to tell you this is a beautiful thing this is something you should be looking at * if I don't identify with it I'm just going to switch off

INTERVIEWER: what approach do you use when teaching Wilfred Owen's poetry/

TEACHER: okay * because I am teaching Wilfred Owen for the exam I have to go to certain basics you know * the techniques being used by Wilfred Owen * the use of metaphor the use of figures of speech * obviously I also give them the background to the poem itself * you have to dissect it * I find that it's not very different from a literary appreciation class you know * basically you are teaching the students to

appreciate this poem written by this man a number of years ago but it's just like teaching any other poem

INTERVIEWER: in fact my next question is what approach do you use when teaching the literary criticism of poetry/

TEACHER: alright * in the first year I take it step by step * so we first start with the element of diction and the choice of words * why does the poet use certain words and not others/ * the connotation of words * what is the different connotations/ * if I had to change one word within/ a line what would happen to that line * so I start by making them aware of the power of words first before I go to anything else because basically diction is at the basis of everything * if they do not develop an affinity to words it is useless that I teach them metaphor it is useless that I teach them similes because first they have to become sensitive to the use of words * then ultimately we go through the different figures of speech * unfortunately the first year it's kind of fragmentation * it's a fragmentary process until ultimately you arrive at the end where you put everything together * alright/ and ultimately as I've said before I use certain approaches like introducing them to lyrics and things like that * to constantly make them aware of the use of words * basically the first year is becoming sensitive to how poets try to transmit their message

INTERVIEWER: during the observed lesson you encouraged students to work in groups and in pairs * any reason for that/

TEACHER: alright * I believe that students need to share ideas and talk with each other * poetry is an intimate thing personal and so they should be encouraged to tell each other what they think about the poem * it's useless for me to do all the talking when ultimately in the exam they are the ones to be expressing their own ideas about the unseen poem * I believe in interaction and interaction allows students to look at poetry as fun * if we use the seminars to lecture then when are students going to get a chance to say something you know * so I encourage them to pair up and do group work because it makes them discuss poetry more freely * and as well in the exam they'll have to be independent so it's important that we allow them to take the lead sometimes * they have to do the interpreting on their as it were otherwise they won't develop the skill you know

INTERVIEWER: at one point during the lesson you told the class that there isn't one right interpretation to the poem * could you elaborate/

TEACHER: okay * this this is something * well I find that students are in a way preconditioned * perhaps by their previous education * they are preconditioned to look at poetry as having a buried meaning and that during crit we are meant to bring that out * I discourage them from looking at poetry in that way * I tell them listen there is no right or wrong interpretation as long as it within the context of the poem * I do this in the first year but also in the second year if they were with someone else * I try to you know * but it's not easy and some of them keep looking at poetry as having one right meaning * I encourage them to share their views and that's why I use group work because it's less intimidating * sometimes they're afraid to tell the teacher * they think I already know the answer so why bother guessing what's in my head

INTERVIEWER: what method do you use during a tutorial devoted to poetry/

TEACHER: it depends on the task * sometimes the task is fragmented in itself * alright/ * if it is that approach I go question by question but then ultimately I try to leave some time to read the poem together with the students and kind of see their reactions to it * alright/ what did this poem leave you with/ did it resonate on some level with you/ would you recommend this to someone else/ on what basis would you recommend it/ or why don't you like this poem/ * it's like I try to challenge them because most students are like oh poetry is boring poetry dead * I try to challenge that * because after two years of studying English at A-level to leave here without an appreciation of words and without an appreciation of poetry I feel it would be a disservice to the students

INTERVIEWER: are there any changes that you would make to the way you teach poetry/

TEACHER: ** it's not the * what we're going through now is leaving behind this idea of fragmenting poetry * what we're going through is this holistic approach * what I liked this year although I think it's still in its initial phases and it needs to be polished is this idea that we are allowing students also to make the focus on their reactions and that it's okay that you don't focus too much on the techniques but focus on a personal reaction to the text * always within the context of the poem itself * I do believe that techniques are at the basis because why are they there if the poet has utilised them/ why shouldn't they know about them/ even this idea of doing away with the notion of you know the metre and so on * I find that students should have an idea of that and in fact I do teach metre when I'm doing literary appreciation because

you know poets have utilised it so they need to know about it * I don't think I would * I mean as a teacher you're always evolving and as a teacher you need to keep up with what is going on even with literary theories and things like that * you can never rest on what you have you know * on what you've done in the past because the approaches are different * I mean I do believe that we should introduce some basic knowledge of certain theories like feminism different schools intertextuality

INTERVIEWER: in fact I have a question about this * does literary theory have a role to play in the teaching of poetry/

TEACHER: yes I do think so * because as we are saying poets are living in the world and they are influenced especially if they are people who are in touch with the literary world they are going to be influenced * and some of them do exploit these theories these tenants * so if you know that a poet comes from a certain approach I think students should be made aware of that * alright you don't go into the depth that you're going to expect at university level but certain basic knowledge of these theories are important

INTERVIEWER: should students be provided with the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

TEACHER: alright * as I said before I don't believe everyone is capable so pushing students to do something which they don't like I think * alright I am all for challenging the students and everything * but this is something so personal writing poetry that if a student doesn't show a personal interest in writing I think it's useless trying to push them you know * I think it's forcing them to do something else which they don't like to do * if they show an interest encourage them and I do encourage them * I do tell them listen if you have anything which you've produced or something do bring it over * I mean if you want you can come during the contact hour * I don't consider myself a poet far from it but a certain affinity * with my kind of theatre background and everything * a certain affinity for words I have * and so and where I find something which is beyond me I tell them listen this might be a case where you speak to someone else who is much more into something like this

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea of allowing students to experience poetry by means of other media not just the printed page/

TEACHER: definitely! I am all for it

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: because I do believe that * there are far more reaching results than just simply students listening to you talking about it or to them talking about it * there is this physical embodiment of words you know and I find it very limiting over here for example that even Shakespeare we don't have the time and we are not allowed to kind of allow the students to go into the words themselves * use the words themselves * portray a scene * not necessarily to act out a scene * I am going beyond that * it's like using certain drama exercises in which students can delve deeper through physical use into characters you know * I find that by using other media you are almost shocking the students into becoming aware of things they would not have been if they had read the poem * if you are * I find this for example when I take the students abroad to the Somme * we have students read Wilfred Owen's poems in certain places where the actual things have occurred * and you realise that a silence falls and you would hear comments like you know my brother is seventeen years old * you know I have a friend who is eighteen years old and he could have been lying here instead of this man or this boy * so the actual physicality of it of being there of looking around them and seeing the trenches and feeling the mud and reading the actual poems I do realise a difference from when I'm lecturing here * I'm not saying you have to take the students to the Somme alright/ * but there are other means

INTERVIEWER: do you access poetry resources online/

TEACHER: yes I do * definitely

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: because I find that there are certain approaches which I might not have thought of myself and also sometimes they for example find a clip which is relevant for the students * it's keeping in touch with what is going on * I definitely keep in touch through the internet through journals trying to read poetry myself * I do believe in that * you have to keep a fresh perspective otherwise you know teaching becomes something dead and boring

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about assessing poetry * what do you ask your students to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

TEACHER: alright * first of all it depends on the rubric * what am I focusing on/ * am I focusing on techniques/ am I focusing on content/ * many times questions have a thematic approach * so in that case I try to connect things * even when I'm lecturing * connect poems to each other through the use of imagery or maybe a recurring word or a metaphor or the theme itself you know * the issue of

forgetfulness or the issue of the Christ * so it's like like * I tell the students do not fragment the essay * try to go for connections between the poems * do not tackle the poems separately but go for things that connect the poems together * and look at them as a collection rather than as individual poems * that is mainly what I do

INTERVIEWER: and what do you ask your students to do when writing a literary criticism essay on an unseen poem/

TEACHER: on an unseen poem * alright * same thing * I tell not to fragment the poem into separate things like * try to look at the poem as a whole * if I am tackling the techniques you know * try to look at the whole poem * do not just look at one particular aspect of it * I always try to urge them to see the thing in its entirety rather than looking at in terms of separate elements because when they fragment things they lose the detail of it * now in an essay usually I tell them to follow the rubric which tells them to give consideration to imagery to theme and so on * so you have to ask them to write a paragraph on imagery a paragraph on theme * also sometimes I tell to look at the poem stanza by stanza but trying to find the connections within the stanzas not so in stanza one he says this in stanza two he says this

INTERVIEWER: personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually encourage students to include their personal response in their essays about poetry/

TEACHER: yes I do * poetry is such a personal thing * what I connect with students do not connect with or they might connect with * I always tell them there is not one truth * just as long as the interpretation is within the context of the poem * I mean don't try to interpret off at a tangent * don't say anything which is not within the poem * but sometimes students amaze you * they come up with a certain interpretation or a certain approach which you might not have considered and so I am very much open to the students response and I do encourage them because this is what poetry is all about * why does a poet write/ * if a piece of literature does not have an audience if a reader does not connect then that is going to remain simply words on a piece of paper * personal connection is very very important I feel

INTERVIEWER: currently MATSEC assesses poetry by means of an essay * what do you think about this/

TEACHER: ** I mean let's face as far as a written component goes an essay is allowing a student to be free in their way they express themselves * we're talking

about a written component * I don't believe in guiding the students because once you start guiding the students they lose their spontaneity * students find it difficult because we guide them so much that when they come to creative writing they find it difficult to freely express themselves so it is a temptation to guide the students and tell them listen look for this or look for that but I think it would be killing the personal response and spontaneity of students if you are doing that * I don't know I mean an alternative could be having students have a discussion about a poem or coursework or something like that * just as long as we're going to be bound by the essay format I think we're going to be limited so the more we open ourselves * obviously we also need to take into consideration the logistics of things * because once you start introducing certain things you start to say we need teachers for this and teachers for that * so I do appreciate that there are certain limitations and certain things * as far as essay writing I do believe that that's the best way * I do prefer it to a guided approach

INTERVIEWER: are there any other changes that you would like to see to the way poetry is being assessed/

TEACHER: what I've been saying * get the students more personally involved and allow the students to be more themselves in their reaction to poetry * it is such a personal and intimate thing that the more we allow the students' personality to come through and to discuss in their own way * if we can find a way how to allow that more then I am all for that

INTERVIEWER: one question on training * should we be provided with training on how to teach and assess poetry/

TEACHER: yes I do yes I do * I think that if we are given training and obviously a chance and an arena where we also can discuss approaches and methodologies and you can arrive at a compromise * I'm not saying that everyone has to teach in a certain way * but at least get common criteria because as it is I don't think that everybody understands clearly what is expected * if we're talking in an exam oriented kind of way * I think that yes allowing for training in a way where we can as mentors and tutors to the students allow discussion between the teachers * it's not I'm coming to teach you how to teach you know * but allowing a common consensus sharing ideas and so on

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

TEACHER: because of the exam I do!

INTERVIEWER: could you elaborate on that/

TEACHER: those lines they begin beating it with a hose to find out what it really means * because basically that's what we are driving our students to do * to find the meaning for a poem and that is an approach I dislike personally because I don't think that there is a real meaning you know * as I said before it is what touches you in a poem and the way the exam is at the moment is not allowing for an appreciation of the use of language * it is trying to find trying to crack the code * and unfortunately we need more space for that * we need more space to allow students to taste the language and find their way through it * in the second year I do encourage that * in fact I allow students to have a certain amount of time during the lecture to read a poem and go through it themselves and then I tell them okay tell me about it * but then ultimately when I realise that there is a rubric I have to guide them towards what's expected of them in the exam

INTERVIEWER: and when they adopt the attitude mentioned in the poem how do they look at you/

TEACHER: it's like but you're the teacher you need to tell me what this is about what I'm meant to be looking for * it's like what am I supposed to do/ what am I supposed to say/ * and when I allow them to do it on their own they're lost * they kind of look at each other and kind of what am going to tell him * and most of them are afraid of making a mistake because education has drummed into them that when you speak out in class you have to be right and the teacher has to applaud you and tell you what a good boy you are what a good girl you are * and the moment I tell them listen what if I disagree with you/ what is the worst that can happen/ * and it's like then there's a relief and you start hearing students saying certain things and then you tell them but what do you think of this * so I encourage that * in the second year especially when I have the basics behind me and I know that I could allow myself a bit of breathing space * but but it is difficult it is difficult

INTERVIEWER: thanks a lot for participating in this interview

Appendix 25 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Teacher H

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * the first few questions are about your own reading and teaching preferences * which component do you prefer teaching most/

TEACHER: definitely not linguistics * I mean linguistics I don't teach but obviously I'm more of a literature person * I enjoy crit greatly but I also enjoy texts you know plays Shakespeare or poetry * whatever I have

INTERVIEWER: when you mention crit * do you prefer poetry or prose/

TEACHER: no I like ** I like both actually * and I wouldn't just like to do poetry * I need a break from poetry sometimes

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

TEACHER: ** fiction mainly * but what type of fiction I suppose you want to ask/ * at the moment I'm into Simon Mawer quite a lot * I'm reading * what am I reading/

INTERVIEWER: *The Glass House*/

TEACHER: yes * I'm really enjoying it and I had read * the first one I had read of him was when * climbing/

INTERVIEWER: I haven't read that * no

TEACHER: what was its name/ * it was really good it got me hooked on him actually you know * but this one I'm reading now is really riveting * you know it's sort of * books which fiction which centres a lot on relationships * getting to know other people * the psychological emotional stuff

INTERVIEWER: what do you understand by the term poetry/

TEACHER: what do you understand by the term poetry/ * illalu! [wow!] what a difficult question * goodness! * it's like telling me what do you understand by to be/ to be * poetry ** basically I imagine putting in a more succinct form certain emotions certain * perspectives certain views of things you know * very succinct putting it in a very concise form I imagine * you know without the luxury of you know not having the luxury of pages * you have to be more precise I suppose more to

the point * I don't know * I think you have to be more clever in a way * more clever with words I imagine * more perspicacious maybe I don't know

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading, listening and writing poetry/

TEACHER: writing poetry I don't write poetry * I hardly ever listen to poetry * I read poetry * I mean I can't say what I enjoy most because I mainly read poetry * I've only very very rarely listened to poetry

INTERVIEWER: and do you mostly read poetry for personal pleasure or for work purposes/

TEACHER: for work purposes!

INTERVIEWER: can you name any poets whose work you particularly enjoy reading/

TEACHER: yes * Larkin

INTERVIEWER: and you used to teach Larkin as well I would imagine/

TEACHER: no I never did * apart from tutorials

INTERVIEWER: do MC English students enjoy studying poetry/

TEACHER: if I can make them or if I can help them to start seeing poetry as something enjoyable then I myself enjoy teaching poetry but if I realise that somehow I'm not getting through to them then it's different * but somehow I do manage * not everybody * but I do manage to make them see the enthusiasm I feel for a poem I'm reading

INTERVIEWER: which students in particular would you say enjoy studying poetry/

TEACHER: yes! normally they are people who have a more creative flair * I mean they are very rare and far between but there are a few * I mean just this morning I had a student who after my crit class came up to me with something he had written * the lyrics of a song for a band he plays with and he wanted me to read it and see if it's saying anything to me you know * and asking me about the choice of words * then yes then you feel * I must have managed to communicate something to them but he happened to be a person who knows how to use words to be a bit more creative with words

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about choice of poems * what do you think of the set text for poetry/ * what do you think of its appropriateness for students of this age and ability/

TEACHER: Owen/ * I mean I've been teaching Wilfred Owen * so subjectively I'm fed up now * I mean I know I can you know * I can quote his poems by heart

because I've been doing them for so many years but somehow in spite of all that I'm saying I feel that it still has a certain relevance for the students today * especially if you put it into the perspective of sort of wars and conflicts going on * if not on a worldwide scale at least in certain pockets of the world you know * I mean they see they see people being killed they see battles raging on the news on television * they can relate I suppose and the fact that Owen died so young * I don't know it makes them relate to his poetry more * so I mean for me it's something sort of it's old hat but for them it's new obviously * so they're hearing * well most of them are hearing it for the first time because some of them did some of the poems for their O-level * so for them it's not that new but for the majority I think Wilfred Owen is somebody whom they haven't ever studied or heard of so he makes quite an impact on them * even though for me it's not new for them it is

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism seminars/

TEACHER: who chooses the poems/ I do!

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about this/

TEACHER: first of all when you are teaching poetry and you choose the poems yourself and not for example MATSEC * I choose poems that I enjoy that have something to say that I have a lot to say about these different poems so I can maybe be able to talk about the poems in a I don't know a more informed way maybe * and if I had to have set texts I would do that too * the only disadvantage with that is that * with everybody selecting his own poetry is that we can be a bit * we tend to be a bit subjective in our selections so maybe we don't cover everything * I try to to do a Petrarchan sonnet a Shakespearean sonnet * I try to do a sort of whole a variation of styles and types of poetry * I normally would at this point in time select a few poems like 'Ozymandias' or 'On his Blindness' * poems which tend to be a bit old-fashioned * so I tend to like modern poetry more but I do try to give them a smattering of traditional kind of structured poems

INTERVIEWER: do you encourage students to bring poems that they'd like to share with the rest of the class/

TEACHER: ** this year I haven't so far because first of all it's been quite * the students I have don't seem to be the type who would be reading poetry * no I haven't done that

INTERVIEWER: but you've done it in the past

TEACHER: yes if there were students * very rarely * but there were some years I remember when I had some students who were particularly interested in literature and they would sort of point out a poem to me and would say could we discuss this in class * and if I find that it's a poem that would appeal or would be relevant to the class then yes I would but it's extremely rare * it hardly ever happens in fact

INTERVIEWER: what kind of poems do you choose for the literary criticism seminars/ what criteria do you keep in mind when making your choice/

TEACHER: I mean I would make sure to give a selection from formal poetry and structured but then as I've said the bulk would be modern poetry which would somehow talk about issues which are more relevant to today if anything * but again poetry being poetry normally the subject of a poem spans cuts across time I think you know * that's why we still do Shakespeare I suppose

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about teaching poetry * why do we teach poetry/

TEACHER: why do we teach poetry/ * why do we teach literature/ *jien naf* [how should I know/] why/ why do we teach maths/ * why do we teach poetry/ *** do you know I've never thought of it/ * again I'm going to ask another question * why do we teach Graham Greene/ I don't know * why do we teach novels/ why do we teach/ why/

INTERVIEWER: should we continue teaching poetry in this day and age/

TEACHER: yes of course

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: because it's a form of expression * I mean it's like teaching people how to appreciate a picture or a painting * do you understand/ * it's a form of enrichment * it's a different way of expressing oneself * sort of communication * it could be film it could be painting it could be sculpture * it could be music * it's one of the arts

INTERVIEWER: some people think that we shouldn't continue teaching poetry * what do you think about that/

TEACHER: it's ridiculous * it's like saying that people shouldn't go to museums to see an exhibition or whatever * to admire paintings by Gauguin or Van Gogh * it's ridiculous

INTERVIEWER: what do you give most importance to when teaching poetry/

TEACHER: obviously the first thing I do with my students is basically try and find out what the poet is trying to convey * the main aim behind the poem * what is he saying and then of course how is he saying it * so of course I give a great deal of

importance to choice of diction then the sound of the word * but first and foremost why this word and I make it a point that students know that when a poet is writing poetry he isn't just scribbling and that's it * it's not a question of inspiration and that's it * normally you know there is a lot of rewriting * why this word and not that word * why does he think that this word conveys what he wants * why that image/ there must be a reason * you know you go into the language * and that's what I do not just for poetry * the language the diction for me is very important * even when we're doing language * reading comprehensions I stress the importance of language of diction * trying to make the students think of other ways of saying things and why this word is more appropriate in this context

INTERVIEWER: what approach do you use when teaching Wilfred Owen's poetry/

TEACHER: again first you talk in general about what the poet is trying to convey in that poem the meaning of the poem and then I go through * maybe this is something that is not that is modern but I do go through the poems line by line word for word and extract as much meaning as I possibly can in the short time we have of course

INTERVIEWER: what approach do you use when teaching the literary criticism of poetry/

TEACHER: similar! I don't change * I'm you know very traditional * I didn't learn how to teach you know * I don't have any pedagogic background whatsoever so you know it's just * at twenty one after my honours degree I was just catapulted into the teaching world and I've remained for ever since * I enjoy it though

INTERVIEWER: during the observed lesson you told students that poetry requires an emotional response * could you explain that further/

TEACHER: I think it's quite clear * a poem needs an emotional kind of attachment on the part of the reader you know * unless you feel the diction and the imagery and what the poet is trying to convey to you by means of his choice of words it's difficult to understand it * do you know what I mean/ I tell students to read with their feelings rather than worry about * about what they'll write in their essay you know * don't get me wrong that's important too but there's other stuff happening in the poem and unless they feel it they won't get it * I think so at least I don't know

INTERVIEWER: on a number of occasions you also asked them to find evidence in the poem * could you explain why/

TEACHER: because unless they substantiate the interpretation it will remain just personal and in some cases it could be far fetched * you know how they are * so I ask

them to look for evidence * to flesh out their intuition as it were * I don't know * if they don't pin it down then they won't be able to make the shift from the initial response to what they'll have to say in an essay * and in an exam that will need to happen in order for them to pass

INTERVIEWER: what method do you use during a tutorial devoted to poetry/

TEACHER: what I found over the years have been * especially with crit * not the students reading out their work but I have a lesson basically * I turn my tutorial into a seminar * they prefer it I ask them obviously * I ask them what they would prefer * to hear what I would have said and see if it tallies with what they have written and whether they have anything to add to what I have said or if they disagree with me because that's one of the beautiful things about poetry in fact * like again * I see an analogy with painting or a piece of music * it might strike me in one way but not you * it might be telling you something but it might not be telling me the same thing * it's very subjective in that sense and poetry more than any other form of literature gives you this freedom of being creative yourself because you are rewriting * when you are analysing a text a poem * normally if it's a writerly text it's something that I can write myself * not a readerly text * the usual Barthian thing you know readerly and writerly * if you are a creative person if you have that something within you which allows you to play with the text and which allows you to be part creator * do you understand/ * first of all I always make sure not to impose one meaning * this is not maths two plus two equal four * in literature two plus two can make five can make six can make one * I try to give them that feeling that they are not being tested on something which has fixed how do you say/ meaning or rigid fixed meaning but it is open to interpretation * as long as they substantiate what they are saying why they feel the poem is saying this how that particular word gives rise in their minds to conjure up certain ideas or * you know if they can substantiate it then forget it * as long as they can substantiate they have that sense of self confidence that they are not as stupid as they think they are I don't know

INTERVIEWER: are there any changes that you would like to make to the way you teach poetry/

TEACHER: no * I don't know maybe I'm being vain but I'm quite happy with the way I do things * it may sound that it's vain of me to say that * I don't know * I've managed to reach out to my students * at least giving them the love * to love poetry to love what they are reading * poetry can be more than just a dull exercise * then the

way they write what they feel about the poems then that's * I can't say it's not my problem but sometimes I notice that students would have been able to get a reaction to the text but then they have great difficulty to put it down in words you know expressing themselves correctly which is hampering of course because obviously their enthusiasm if they haven't managed to express themselves coherently or whatever is affected * that feeling of freedom or whatever that I gave them of being creative you know * this is all affected if they are unable to express themselves well in writing

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about some innovations * should students be provided with the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

TEACHER: no I don't think so

INTERVIEWER: why not/

TEACHER: ** because I think it's too early first of all * if you told me to write poetry I would tell you I'm incapable of writing poetry * you know what I mean/ it's not something taught * you can't teach people to write poetry * so I don't know * unless you go to a poetry teaching class or whatever * you have these workshops where people discuss their poetic abilities * you have to be a writer first

INTERVIEWER: does literary theory have a role to play in the teaching of poetry/

TEACHER: in my case no * because basically most of the stuff I learnt later on about techniques of literary theory or whatever came after * in a sense that I discovered this stuff many years after I had started teaching * I don't think that students are ready for it

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea of allowing students to experience poetry by means of other media not just the printed page/

TEACHER: for me these things I don't know * they don't mean anything to me

INTERVIEWER: why not/

TEACHER: why/ because I am a person who wants the text in my hand and I want to turn the pages * I don't want to read it on a screen I don't know * I don't feel as though I'd be comfortable so I don't believe in it

INTERVIEWER: do you access poetry resources online/

TEACHER: no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

TEACHER: because I have lots of books at home and I just go to my library and look up my poetry books and find all I need there

INTERVIEWER: what do you ask your students to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

TEACHER: the same things I would say about any other literary text * be it Shakespeare be it Greene * I mean if it along a certain topic or a certain theme * if they're talking about a theme like the futility of war they need to think of the poems that illustrate this theme more directly or those poems which are focused on that them if you like and make sure that before they write their essay they've chosen the right poems which to discuss * and normally I tell them to focus on two or three so that they can go into more depth rather than skimming over many poems

INTERVIEWER: and when it comes to an unseen poem * what do you ask your students to do when writing a literary criticism essay/

TEACHER: ** I tell them to do what we do in class basically you know * read through the poem or the passage or whatever try and understand what's found between the lines and then go through it bit by bit and see what points are most salient and discuss them and sift the poem to see what interpretation emerges * basically that's it * the same thing we do in class * we do it in the traditional manner * I haven't been taught how to teach poetry * but the way I do it as I've said is we read it together * first I ask them what they think the poem is about for themselves * let them think for themselves * then I give them my point of view and we see where they might have gone wrong or where I could see things in a different way * and then I apply that meaning if you want * not I apply it but I tell them to see how the poet has gone about conveying this idea through the various lines in the various stanzas

INTERVIEWER: personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually encourage students to include their personal response in their essays about poetry/

TEACHER: I think it is based on a personal response * I mean that's the starting point * if it's an unseen poem it's not a taught poem so it's not the point of view of the teacher or whatever * it is definitely their view * I personally cannot relate to anything objectively * I mean in my case it's always a subjective response * do you understand/ *if my initial response is not positive then it is going to colour my reading of that particular poem * I don't know whether you understand what I'm trying to say * how can you be objective/ you could I suppose by criticising your own subjective point of view * that's what I mean when I say I always ask my students to

substantiate their point of view by lifting words from the text and seeing if their ideas are being corroborated or substantiated * then I think you can move towards objectivity and you say maybe I've read too much into this * but I think initially the response has to be subjective * I imagine * I never thought about this yes definitely!

INTERVIEWER: currently MATSEC assesses poetry by means of an essay * what do you think about this/

TEACHER: rather than questions or coursework * basically * in fact this is something my students asked me today * they said miss can we have a model answer/ because they find it difficult and it's truly difficult to set your ideas down in writing * they want a structured kind of essay * they want me to tell them in this paragraph do this in that paragraph do that * they want a model which for me is a bit scary in the sense that it constricts you * I don't know * but then again I understand them because they feel lost when it comes to writing an essay * they feel that they're not up to it somehow * that they don't have a sense of direction * when I did my A-level and O-level we always had questions * that's how it used to be and that is easier because you're more focused * it's easier but it still helps give the students more focus * they feel safer because they know that they need to focus on something specific * I think we should consider bringing that system back * I find that when you ask students questions they put all they have learnt to more use if you like * an exam should be there to show what a student knows not what they don't * and I think even for me to this day writing an essay requires a greater concentration of the skills you have learnt * I don't think at this stage at this level it is fair on the student

INTERVIEWER: are there any other changes that you would like to see to the way poetry is being assessed/

TEACHER: no basically this is the change that I'd like to see * they need a sense of direction * this is what worries them * and the question they asked me today is very relevant to what we are saying * they told me miss can you give us a model answer/ you know * especially since there is no model answer in the syllabus * I mean do we know exactly what is expected of them/ are we given directions/ no

INTERVIEWER: a penultimate question on training * should we be provided with training on how to teach and assess poetry/

TEACHER: I suppose no * I would hate it * I would hate anybody telling me how to teach

INTERVIEWER: how about sharing ideas as a department/

TEACHER: but that again it might make me sound arrogant or bigheaded or whatever * set in my ways * but I'm fifty five * last week I was invited to a meal by some ex-students of mine and they told the one we remember is *Macbeth* you teaching us *Macbeth* * I was young and used to climb through the window into the classroom to avoid being told off by the principal for being late again * it was nice * they remembered something about my lessons * it was really nice * okay I didn't do anything great in my life but there are some people for whom certain things have meant a lot in their lives * and nobody taught me how to do that

INTERVIEWER: how about sharing ideas with your colleagues/ we meet and share ideas on how we teach

TEACHER: yes * I would be very happy to hear from other people * in fact we share ideas * I do that with X and Z and they sometimes tell me things which I would never have thought of * I mean it's not going to change me and the way I teach but it does give me something more which I maybe can use while teaching * I would try that or not

INTERVIEWER: last thing * now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

TEACHER: what we were saying before no/ about the writerly and readerly text you know * yes definitely!

INTERVIEWER: do you feel your students do that/

TEACHER: not really because basically that is what I try to tell them * that you know the poem just because I am seeing it in this way it does necessarily have to mean that * it does not just have one meaning * you know what we were saying about two plus two equals four and six and seven * it's like music and so on * they start with the notion that a poem means one thing

INTERVIEWER: why do they do that/

TEACHER: because they want to pass an exam and they think that there is a certain way of doing things * like those students telling me to give them a model answer * I mean that is not restricting meaning * that is just because they want to see how they should structure their essay * how they should go about putting their criticism of the poem in a structured form * because of the expectations of MATSEC as well * but

otherwise no I make sure that they change their attitude and that they are open to other views * and as I've said as long as they can substantiate it you know

INTERVIEWER: thanks a lot for participating in this interview

Appendix 26 – Semi-structured Interview Written Responses and Transcript: Chief Examiner and Chair of Syllabus Panel for MC English

Written Responses

1. A number of literary critics and educational theorists claim that poetry is experiencing a crisis, not only in our schools but also in the world beyond the classroom. What are your thoughts on this issue?

The knee-jerk reaction is of course to agree. Outside the circles where it survives intimately, as an inhabited discourse or an object of study, people don't have poetry colouring their conversation, their perspective, their lives. But I'd be careful about saying that poetry is in crisis, if all we mean by that is saying that vast swathes of the population no longer know Dante, Shakespeare, Whitman, frost (to mention poets who were 'known') like these used to be known, even if we can ascertain what that 'knowing' (whatever it might mean) amounted to. Intuitively, I think we can agree with the statement in the question, in the sense that intuitively what it says seems self-evident (excuse the tautology there…). But it begs a lot of other questions. Little magazines and poetry pamphlets are increasing, not declining – does that mean that poetry is not in crisis? More people are trying their hand at writing poetry than ever before – does that mean that poetry is not in crisis? Poetry is still present in most syllabi – does that mean that poetry is not in crisis? The internet is awash with poetry sites and new poetry – what does this mean and is this enough to suggest that the crisis is thereby dispelled? We know that not all cultures have literature, or its concept (refer to Marino or Derrida on that) but all cultures have poetry and its concept – what does that mean, in talk of the crisis of poetry? The work of Mark Edmundson some years ago struck a chord, suggesting that there was a chord to be struck…all these are not ways of shirking the question, but rather of indicating that poetry in all its forms and aspects (including those related to orality and performance) is still demonstrably very present where one would expect it to be, that this presence in itself guarantees nothing, but also that the absence/death of poetry, if we can imagine it – a culture 'without poetry', poetrylessness – is not a state that empirically we have to hand, and I don't think we're going to have it either, or that we shall see it in our lifetime. But this is to reinscribe a discourse of crisis that I would want to problematise. The most I would readily agree to is that there is

probably a receding, if you like, of the attunement to what poetry represents. This is considered further in the answers below.

2. What do you understand by the term 'poetry'?

I find it very hard to answer this question without thinking of Derrida's 'che cos'é la poesia?'. Or, indeed, what has been said by a range of figures on this question, from Heidegger on Hölderlin to Kermode on Stevens to Ricks on Eliot, etc. Beyond that, however, two points. The first is that poetry, in my view, is that which is, precisely, opaque to this kind of question, or to an interview like this one. I don't mean this in some kind of teasing way, but rather as a reflection on some thoughts that I have had about poetry in work done in the last year, which leads me to my second point. If I had to answer this question in a very personal way now, beyond all the practiced answers I could give, I would say that today poetry is that which shows us more powerfully than anything else that not everything in language is reducible to algorithmic instrumentality. At the same time, nothing is more efficient, in this world of character-counting expression and even by that measure, than poetry. Poetry, in my view, lives through that paradox and is that value. But this is a very personal response.

3. From your experience, do you think that MC English students enjoy poetry? Why/why not?

Yes, they enjoy it. One has to teach it well, of course, whatever that means and however we want to define that, but yes they enjoy it. They do so because, quite simply and if that condition of 'good teaching' is in place, they 'get' it. After they have a poem explained to them – to the extent that the explanation/appreciation is necessary – there is a sense of appreciative understanding I have witnessed and a sense, too, that there is something in the poem which may defeat and frustrate understanding, and which they tend to be intrigued by. This may seem over-optimistic – but I am assuming in these questions that we are speaking about students who will have been discovered to have a receptivity to poetry anyway. We can, of course, speak about those who will scoff at poetry, either in the classroom or beyond, and who will scoff forever, but I don't get the impression that this interview is about those responses…

4. Why does poetry form part of the MC English syllabus and examination?

Some simple responses. 'Because it always has.' And because the syllabus panel never conceived removing it. And because I think the panel sensed and understood, even in the kind of discussions that go on in that kind of context (this was not a panel with the brief of intent of, say, a colloquium at Cerisy-la-Salle, self-evidently) that the encounter with poetry is the only witness we have to the enduring value of whatever it is that we might wish to take from what is suggested in the answers above. (see, particularly, 2)

5. Should students be provided with the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the MC English syllabus? Why/why not?

Yes. But it should not be up for assessment, in that case. And my yes assumes that the 'teaching' of that, if 'teaching' is the word, contracts itself to being excellent.

6. In an appendix the 2013 syllabus explicitly states that 'Reference to literary critics and theorists does not make up part of the assessment criteria at Advanced Level' even though 'the examiners may choose to award evidence of broader reading within an author's work or across critique of that author, and/or reference to critics and theorists if these are discerningly and appropriately (rather than tokenistically) used' (MATSEC, 2010, p. 8). Does literary theory have a part to play in an MC English course? Why/why not?

Some context. Those words were put there to dispel misapprehensions which were floating around at the time, which the panel was sensitive to. Clearly, one does not need to be quoting Eliot or Richards or Ricks or Kermode or Steiner or Jameson or Derrida or Lyotard or Ranciére or Badiou to get an 'A' grade (incidentally the last of these is mentioned here also because of the relevance to the interview of his statement, whether disingenuous or not, that the age of poets is over). If someone wants to mention them and to do so pertinently, then of course the marking will determine whether that deserves 'brownie' points or not. To the final question in 6, here is my personal response. I would hope that teachers will always be aware of what diverse areas of literary criticism can contribute in teaching 'to' the syllabus, and that they can be discerning in deciding how to 'release' that knowledge in different classroom situations. An anecdote: the person who taught me 'O' level literature, and who did it memorably and exceedingly well and who today teaches at

the Junior College, referred us regularly to Coleridge on *Macbeth*. Coleridge's criticism, as we know, is as theoretical as anything that came later. That didn't harm anybody, and it helped quite a few of us.

7. In your opinion, why are the poetry components assessed by means of an essay?
Quite simply, because they always have, and because the last syllabus panel was not the appropriate juncture to change this.

8. What do you think of alternative methods of assessing poetry, e.g. course work, poetry writing in response to published poems etc.? Do they have a place on the syllabus?
I think this question can only be answered if, or once, the structure of MATSEC is changed.

9. The 2013 syllabus states that 'examiners will be looking for appreciation as much as critique' (MATSEC, 2010, p. 5) when assessing candidates' literary criticism essays on an unseen poem. How do you distinguish between the two terms?
The distinction, I think, is both implicitly and explicitly there in the Billy Collins poem quoted at the end of the interview.

10. Personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet. What value, if any, should a candidate's personal response to an unseen poem or selection of poems from a set text be given during the marking process?
I think it should be given quite a lot of importance. I would hope that the marking is sensitive enough to be discerning about it where it occurs – and to not mark down other students who don't give a 'personal' response. I would hope too that the teaching is sensitive and helpful in directing students in how to best write an essay that can communicate that personal response to poetry.

11. What are your thoughts on the use of a published standard list of criteria when marking literary criticism poetry essays and essays on a selection of poems from a set text? Should such a list be devised and made available to all relevant stakeholders by means of a detailed test manual?

See my response to 2.

12. What do you think is the influence of assessment on teachers' methodology and students' engagement with poetry?

I think that it shapes it and that it constricts it to an appreciable extent. But let us also admit that the encounter exists in the first place because of – and through – awareness of that assessment, and that this probably doesn't 'kill' the encounter with poetry for those students who were always going to have a meaningful relation with poetic language. Indeed, it might also goad it.

13. Are there any changes that you would like to see in the way poetry is being assessed in the MC English examination?

It is probably fit for purpose. If there is the opportunity to redefine the purpose, which we hope to get one day, then we can discuss the changes in assessment.

14. In the 2013 syllabus the description of what students are expected to do in the literary criticism components seems to underscore the significance of a stylistic approach to the way students read and write about an unseen poem. In your opinion, why does the syllabus implicitly recommend this particular approach?

I'm not entirely sure about that, and evidently we'd need to discuss what is meant by 'stylistic' here. Certainly nobody on the panel was an 'expert' in stylistics, but I don't think that's the thrust of this question, and style is a very hard thing to define or capture anyway (I've just finished writing about this, and that came across to me even more powerfully as a result). If I understand the question right, though, I'd relate it to the fact that any method that might be informed by stylistics in the broadest sense is there in the syllabus at that level for the same reason that at the next level up, one starts students off in textual analysis by methods that are essentially informed by narratology, explication-de-texte methods, etc… Paul de Man was probably right to call these 'formalist' methods excessively 'correct', but it is also true that without them there would be the dangers of impressions that T. S. Eliot spoke of in *The Sacred Wood*.

15. What value do other poetry teaching models have (i.e. content-based, personal growth)?

16. What teaching techniques would you advise teachers to use when teaching poetry?

I'm not the best person to ask about 'models' and 'techniques'…my training, teaching and research tends to problematise all that…I'd rather the focus were on the techniques of students' writing…

17. Are there any changes that you would like to see taking place in the teaching of poetry at postsecondary level?

One change – and it would be magnificent if it could be effected. Let's do away with the practice of teachers giving students extensive prepared notes and the suggestion thereby that this is the 'safe' approach to studying for the exam.

18. Now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in light of what we've discussed during this interview.

I know what the poem is driving at. But I fear that it is a twee expression of what it is that makes poetry unnerving, and consequently and by a cruel irony it's taming and denatures the very 'force' (to use Ricks's term) in poetry that it wants to honour.

Interview Transcript

INTERVIEWER: in your opinion why are the poetry components assessed by means of an essay/

EXAMINER: I think that we test poetry by means of an essay simply because it's the way that's it's always been done ** in order to test poetry in other ways I think we would need to change MATSEC quite extensively and quite possibly involve coursework if there's going to be any significant change ** we could of course think about segmenting the answers in an hour given to any poetry question whether it's a set text or an unseen text ** but I'm not entirely sure that that would change things extensively * we have seen nothing when doing that here to suggest that students' performance would be better in terms of the results in their assessment or that it would necessarily change the quality of their response to poetry ** and whatever we do there's always the frustration of knowing that an excellent seminar revolving around even one text for example might not have the rewarding quality that most students and lecturers would have experienced represented or reproduced in the students' writing in the exam * the only significant change that can be thought of

there will require coursework will require writing poetically about the poems one is studying but then that requires the confidence and reassurance of knowing that the people standing in front of students are ready qualified disposed trained to teach like that and also at some level we're going to need the reassurance that those same people can respond well to poetry whatever that means and however you want to gauge that * but that opens an entirely different can of worms

INTERVIEWER: do you think that the exam has an impact on students' engagement with poetry/ in my research I'm finding that students tend to see poetry as a valuable cultural artefact but not as something to read for pleasure

EXAMINER: I'm in two minds about that because the very fact that you say you read for pleasure is obviously yes we want to get an emotive and intuitive untutored and unrehearsed response from students and we'd like students to be able to ** react well to that but you know as I said in my written response we also have to keep in mind that the encounter happens in the first place because there is an exam * otherwise we have no way of framing it * otherwise it's probably going to bring back all the impressionistic responses to poetry that Eliot in the early part of the twentieth century was worried about * and I think we also probably need to remember that before the latter half of the eighteenth century perceptions about poetry were very similar to the ones we have now * there was no sense that one ought to chime with poetry in the way we'd understand that now * if you probably look at what the Augustans felt on that in an English context and we would also need to go back to the influence of the German Romantics * so I think the idea that poetry is there to be enjoyed makes us think of another way of looking at poetry * that it demands a rigour of response * that it demands a discipline of response * the ancient practice of orality in poetry makes it very clear that poetry is there to be enjoyed communally yes * it's also a form of entertainment * but it's very much about rigour * it's very much about discipline * certainly in those who are performing it * and therefore the enjoyment I think is never going to be entirely an unrehearsed enjoyment

INTERVIEWER: you've mentioned the word performance * now for example in schools in the UK and in the US there is a lot of emphasis on performing poetry on students being asked to do slam poetry which probably creates an engagement with the text and stops students from seeing poetry as being solely academic * in Malta we don't really have that kind of thing and when students were asked about whether they know of slam poetry or whether they would like to do slam poetry or even creative

writing in class they were very negative or hesitant when it comes to that ** is it because we are depicting poetry as a genre that has to be read with this kind of rigour you were mentioning/

EXAMINER: well I think there's a tremendous lot that could be said in response to that * first of all that happens in the UK because of the impact and charisma of poets like Benjamin Zephaniah * performance poetry happens because of that * I think that students in the UK are probably reacting in this way in response to the popularity of performance poetry in the US which has been strong probably since the 60s * and I think * so let's break this down * this is not a very structured response but just a few thoughts * we still have the institution and there is still an institutionality to it * to the poetry reading * and perhaps we want to see how students respond to that * I think I would also want to see more closely at what levels and contexts in the UK those performances are OK * because I think they are only wonderful means of engaging students with poetry at the beginning * clearly the higher up you go in the study of poetry the less present these techniques are * so I think it would be quite significant to discover that they are only present up to for example the lower regions of undergraduate study

INTERVIEWER: so the period I'm interested in/ post-16 education

EXAMINER: yes * I think you know really let's go with anything that gets students interested in poetry but I also need to get them interested in response to poetry * if we're bringing it simply as a means to ** I think I would want to seeing it taking place within a broader context * a more carefully thought out approach to the teaching of poetry * I don't think that that on it's own is going to give students a representation of what poetry is because * so I think it's good * it's probably the equivalent to the older traditions of oral poetry ** there are cultural issues why that might not translate well * I'm wondering about oral forms of poetry in a Maltese context ** I think the response to poetry in most Maltese classes has always been a little bit stilted * there's always a sense of awe when we're responding to poetry * it would be good to see that go but I think we have this sense of what Benjamin called aura whenever poetry is concerned * I think that is a habit that dies hard * I don't see that kind of response to poetry receding in what young people are doing when they set up poetry clubs * so you can get the really odd result and funny outcome that you're introducing something like slam poetry to students presumably to liberate them but doing it institutionally and making it feel like an imposition

INTERVIEWER: one thing I found is that both teachers and students have a lot of respect for the aura of poetry but at the same time they both admit not to reading a lot of poetry * sort of always leaving it for the classroom context * what are your thoughts on this/

EXAMINER: do the teachers say that as well/

INTERVIEWER: yes * and one idea proposed by research conducted in the UK is that for students to read poetry they have to see their teachers as role models * so teachers have to adopt the stance of readers in the class rather than just

EXAMINER: I think that's correct * but what you say is it only specific to a Maltese context that you found or is it recorded as occurring in the UK and the US as well/

INTERVIEWER: I found it in the school I'm focussing on but research also shows that it exists in other contexts * for example one particular researcher in the UK found that amongst primary school teachers * their knowledge of poetry and their knowledge of poets was minimal * and she found that after doing an intervention with them and encouraging them to read more broadly she found that this had an effect on students' own reading of poetry

EXAMINER: this is reassuring to know *** in many ways it's odd isn't it/ because poetry is in some sense more available for immediate reading than other forms due its relative conciseness * what I have noticed is that if you mention in a Maltese context even among our BA students poets like Jo Shapcott Alice Oswald then there's no light of recognition * whereas they read a hell of a lot of fiction that's true including difficult fiction * and I think you're exactly right * unless they see us reading more poetry then they're not going to follow suit * having said that there are at least three among us both full time and part time colleagues who speak to them fairly regularly about what is happening in British poetry I would say * and that has had an effect on some of them * I think you're exactly right to say that unless * it's a Girardian effect * unless they see others reading poetry they're not going to do so that easily * but there is that problem of course ** you walk into a bookshop and there are no poetry collections and I think they're not going to order the latest Wendy Cope * they're not going to order the latest Simon Armitage whereas they will most definitely order the latest Ian McEwan and it is a lack of availability of poetry * its presentness * that might have an effect on students' reading of poetry

INTERVIEWER: another parallel I found between teachers and students is the idea that poetry is difficult and that in order to understand poetry you have to engage in

analysis * the word analysis kept cropping up constantly * what are your thoughts on this/

EXAMINER: no I don't think that's correct * I don't think that's correct at all * I mean poetry is one of the most immediate forms we have and I would want to speak about the issue by referring to what Jonathan Culler says about the difficulty objections to literature * I'm happy to take my views on the issue of difficulty from his book because I think the people writing about difficulty and its relation to literary culture are exactly right ** a colleague of mine working in another department once said that the difficult words or the difficult concepts I know are the easy words and concepts I learnt which you refused to learn * I think there's some truth in that ** I would put it differently * I don't think it's necessarily a question of difficulty * poetry has to be difficult * poetry has to be oblique hermetic succinct compressed sharp and so on and so forth * but if we don't show students I think in a culture that places so much emphasis on supposed accessibility and transparency of expression that there is also this choice * that there is also a value in obliquity then I think we're letting them down * I think poetic language has some wonderful effects of compression and I think it's a counter culture * it's corrective to the idea that language should be algorithmic and open to instrumentality * I think poetry is the best means we have to show them that it can be like that but not always necessarily so * I think if we don't show them that then we are letting them down

INTERVIEWER: you've taught at this particular level for a number of years * what are your thoughts on the poem 'Introduction to Poetry'/ the stance adopted by the speaker in relation to poetry and the stance adopted by the students * why is that kind of dynamic happening there/ in the poem and by extension in the classroom you were in as a teacher and perhaps what's happening currently in our own classrooms at postsecondary level

EXAMINER: OK * what I thought about the poem is * I think this is the kind of poem that would work very well with the post-16 age groups because I think it shows them the limitations perhaps of a particular response to poetry * but I think that my misgivings about the poem are that it is the kind of text that is equivalent to texts that are extremely good teaching texts at a certain level but then they appear to take on a kind of allegorical parabolic truth about literature pedagogy that we'd start to think in the terms that those texts impose * and after reading this poem I would want to read again what poststructuralists have said about Celan because this I think is a

packaging of that kind of thought * an approachable packaging an accessible packaging as well as a naturing packaging and * having said that let's give it credit * the most ethical criticism is the form of criticism that finds a means and a way of responding individually to every individual poem * in other words if literary criticism has to reinvent itself innovatively whenever it's applied to a new poem * then this is essentially not a million miles away from that and what it expresses is important for students and teachers to know and think of

INTERVIEWER: you're at the receiving end of postsecondary education * you receive students who have followed a course in which they've read poetry in their literary criticism lessons * they've dealt with a set text * are you satisfied with those students when it comes to their engagement with poetry/ * when it comes to their ability to read poetry to understand it to write about it

EXAMINER: no I don't think I can be because quite simply they haven't read enough * and we do a very simple exercise in the first year and we tell them look we're going to give you the names of five poets please place them in chronological order and they can't do that * and that is a classificatory exercise * it's not an exercise in gauging students' suppleness of response or range of responses * but I think it's relevant * whether you can expect anything more at that level is a dubious point * I think that quite clearly they read less than the notional sense of what an undergraduate should be reading and there is also the issue that given a choice they will always opt for a novel than poetry * they don't get that choice to start with * I think they come with the receptivity with the willingness the ability and the potential * they don't come ready and I don't expect them to come ready * not realistically

INTERVIEWER: when it comes to their own writing about poetry * for example if they're writing about an unseen poem * what are your thoughts about their ability there/

EXAMINER: they're very hesitant * they look for structure * their responses are rehearsed perhaps in terms of what we expect them to say ** in fairness we only have six credits across the entire course where they respond to texts in an unseen way and I think that definitely by third year we see a finer sense of discernment * a readier ability to respond to poetic texts * they finally in some way seem to get it by that stage * by third year I would say and I'm saying the second semester of third year because by that time if they're lucky they would have done two credits on practical criticism of poetry and four credits on techniques of poetry reading applied criticism

INTERVIEWER: you're saying that by the end of third year they would get it * is it because of what you do in those three years or is it because of their maturity or something else/

EXAMINER: I think it's because they've matured and it's also because they've read so much by that time that this would have tutored naturally their response to poetry ** and that primes you as a reader independently of what your lecturers would have done in class * at this level of course when you're saying response to poetry it means to write critically about it in the approved way of literary criticism * and I think they do realise why that critical dimension is necessary * I think they do need to have that further level of coaching in how to write acceptably at this level * they get a bit of that in the writing seminars as well * now we have writing support sessions

INTERVIEWER: one of the factors you've mentioned is the importance of reading broadly * now in post-16 education we have a system whereby students are reading one set text * a selection of poems from one particular poet and then dealing with different poems on a weekly basis perhaps during literary crit * do you feel that that kind of model allows you to create the kind of student you want/ a more engaged student with poetry * does it allow them to read broadly/

EXAMINER: probably it would be better if we had a text that would allow them to sample different kinds of poetry

INTERVIEWER: there exist assessment systems like the IB which allow students to read more broadly

EXAMINER: yes yes and I think that could possibly be in many ways better especially if it's well structured in terms of exposing students to poetry's different forms * tonalities as well * but I think you're always doing this kind of thing within a specific pedagogical venture and if we change to that system then again we're doing so with the assumption that the people standing up in front of a class of students are able to respond sensitively and with discernment to the expectations implied by this newer system which would allow them to look at a broader range of poetry * the current system we have is pedagogically safer * it's not necessarily better

INTERVIEWER: this is the second time you've mentioned the people standing in front of the students * do you feel that the kind of teachers we have currently in their makeup their training their reading even * do you feel they represent the ideal teacher of poetry/

EXAMINER: I think if I were the head of department in a school like Junior College

** one makes choices with some discretion as to who to designate to do what * and especially if I had a system like the IB then I think I would be careful about whom to appoint as teachers * clearly for example in any department we're going to find people who are better at teaching language awareness as opposed to literary appreciation * so yes if you're asking teachers to teach poetry in a way that places a premium on appreciation on performance and so on and so forth then I think you have to choose quite carefully because as a head you have the right to expect of everyone good language awareness and the ability to teach that * but there has to be I think an ability to be open to the idea of inviting someone like Benjamin Zephaniah to come into the school * which doesn't happen here but which happens in other educational contexts * a writer in residence for example

INTERVIEWER: so can the intake at undergraduate level be improved/

EXAMINER: I don't think it can realistically be improved * in order for it to be improved then we'd have to transform MATSEC * I think we're reasonably happy with what we get given that the system both here and there is what it is and then of course it's our job to try to improve things * I don't think that too much more can be expected given the macro issues

INTERVIEWER: are you satisfied with the current assessment system when it comes to poetry per se/

EXAMINER: I'm satisfied that there is enough on the ground to give students some of the building blocks that one looks for in terms of allowing students the opportunity to respond in a tutored way * it might be good if we could allow students to read poetry more broadly * it might be good if you have situations where there are writers in residence * there are some rare educational contexts in Malta where that happens * I think there are some contexts where there is a readiness towards innovating and thinking outside the box * but what you're hoping for in the context we have is that students will be lucky enough to encounter a teacher in the schools * and these teachers are more numerous I think than we realise * teachers in the schools who are able to get them through the syllabus because that is what is expected and in fairness there is an implicit contract here that we have to observe and respect * and beyond that that you're teaching them as you're taking them through Keats as you're taking them through Owen etcetera there is something else that you let them glimpse * and therefore you're getting back to the issue of the person standing at the front of the class * if it's all perfunctory * if it's all syllabus-led * if it's all about passing the

exam * then something has been fulfilled of course and let's not underestimate the importance of that * but you're looking for something more I think * and I think that that something more can emerge in some of the sixth forms we have where the conditions are favourable because either the groups are small or the staff is very good but I can't see it happening in some other contexts where teachers for example have a timetable of twenty two hours and they have to do this because it's better

INTERVIEWER: what are your thoughts on teacher formation/ you've sort of broached the subject already * we've mentioned teachers and reading * teachers positioning themselves as readers * how about teacher education and the way they are formed/

EXAMINER: I think it's very worrying * there are two things that are worrying here * that there aren't as many area specific opportunities for teacher training that would help us to be more reasonably reassured * so recurrently reinvigorated means to get teachers up to speed with current thinking in terms of teaching poetry * I think that's necessary * but I don't think that students emerging from the Faculty of Education course despite recent changes in the course design have enough content to be able to respond well at this level * I think they're undertrained and there's nothing at a higher level to compensate for that unless they take a postgraduate education course * I think that's worrying

INTERVIEWER: so a teacher who is applying for a job at a postsecondary school intending ultimately to teach English and ultimately to teach poetry in class * what would you feel is the right kind of formation for that teacher/ we're talking about a teacher of poetry in a postsecondary school who will try to create engagement with poetry

EXAMINER: I would want to be sure that they have a good idea of the canon of English poetry * I think that's vital * I'd want to know that they have * even if they haven't gone into it * even if they don't have this on the day of their appointment * I would want to feel reasonably sure that they're looking at some of the most fundamental works of criticism of the twentieth century on poetry * Steiner Ricks Eliot possible even a little bit of Richardson * I think if you're not at that level * because here you're no longer a secondary school teacher * if you don't have that curiosity then I can't see how you can bring a certain je ne sais quoi to the classroom and that's without even mentioning the possibility of looking at journals like *Poetry London* * *PN Review* and so on and so forth * so I think what we're saying is that we

want a specialist kind of teacher for whom all of this is viscerally important

INTERVIEWER: you're also talking about professional development here * it's not just initial teacher training

EXAMINER: yes * I think where we're very poor is providing teachers in the schools if they have that curiosity with a means of developing * and this is our fault of course * the department here and DALE [Department of Arts and Languages in Education] could possibly look at collaboration in refresher courses * good enjoyable short sessions * seminars even where this could start to happen and where there is no obligation to attend but where you'd think less of yourself if you didn't

INTERVIEWER: thanks a lot for your contribution

Appendix 27 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Student A

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course ** so which lessons do you like most out of your entire English course/ and why do you like them/

STUDENT: * I think I enjoy most the smaller sessions * none in particular but since we all get to talk about what we're learning * it's more interactive than lectures

INTERVIEWER: how about poetry/ the poetry lectures the poetry seminars and tutorials

STUDENT: I enjoy like reading it and trying to understanding it and discussing it but I think we focus a bit too much on analysing it specifically the special terms and sometimes I think that's a bit too much * it takes us away from the point of the poem

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

STUDENT: I like most things but * specifically I like things which are relatable but not too close to reality because I can see that around me I don't need to read about it [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: do you have any particular authors in mind which you enjoy reading/

STUDENT: * my favourite author is John Green * I don't know * then I try to look up different ones that people recommend to me but my favourite author would probably be John Green

INTERVIEWER: so when it comes to reading for pleasure * do you go for fiction/ do you go for drama/ do you go for poetry/ or some other genre

STUDENT: I prefer fiction * fantasy * to be honest I ask people what books they really like and if they tell me something then I read it

INTERVIEWER: what do you understand by the term poetry/

STUDENT: ** it's * I don't really know * I've never been asked to define it but I think it's a short bit of writing that has a certain element of rhythm to it but not necessarily ** it's more artistic than prose in the way it's set out and it's usually a bit less literal than prose

INTERVIEWER: if you had to compare it to something using a metaphor or a simile what would you compare it to/

STUDENT: ** I don't really know * I think ** I don't think there is anything to describe poetry in general because it's way too vast a term to actually define it

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading or listening to poetry/

STUDENT: reading * I do read sometimes but it's not * I prefer prose because poems it's more fun to discuss than to read for me personally * to discuss with other people

INTERVIEWER: how about listening to poetry/

STUDENT: no I've never actually bothered

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: I don't know * I listen to audio books a lot like when I'm doing things but like that's a continuing thing * unlike listening to poetry * my sister has a CD of slam poetry and I do play it sometimes and I do enjoy listening to it * but I don't listen to much poetry otherwise

INTERVIEWER: how about lyrics/ do you read music lyrics/

STUDENT: yes * to me the major importance is in the lyrics * some lyrics don't make sense and my friends make fun of me for criticising incorrect grammar in lyrics and all that

INTERVIEWER: do you distinguish between poetry and lyrics in your mind/

STUDENT: * I see them as different but extremely alike because they have a lot of similar qualities * they can change so much between different genres but at the same time they both have that sort of metaphorical way of getting to you and putting the meaning first

INTERVIEWER: can you name any musicians or bands whose lyrics you particularly enjoy/

STUDENT: Relient K * they use clever lyrics that have lots of underlying meanings and * they're very smart in the way they twist around metaphors and making one sentence lead into another * I think those are the one I like for lyrics

INTERVIEWER: for you that's poetry/

STUDENT: * I guess it's similar to it * I wouldn't call it poetry exactly but it's close

INTERVIEWER: do you read poetry for personal pleasure or for study purposes/

STUDENT: for study purposes more I think because we study quite a bit of poetry and * especially in crit classes and things like that * and it's not that I don't enjoy it

but it's sort of enough for me and reading two poems a week is enough for me * so I don't read more in my spare time

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about choice of poems * do you like all or any of Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: to be honest I'm not so keen on them because * I do find him a good poet but we have an excess of Wilfred Owen war poetry * they're all very similar even though they have their differences at the end of the day they all boil down to the same thing and * I don't know I find it a bit excessive and it's sort of like * when we had one or two at O-level I really enjoyed that but when we started to read so much I've started to be put off by them because there's so much

INTERVIEWER: so what would you rather do/

STUDENT: I'd rather have quite a variation * I mean like we have in crit or in * yes in crit exactly like * we have such a different variety coming at us instead of just one specific poet

INTERVIEWER: do you like all or any of the poems you read during your literary criticism poetry seminars/

STUDENT: I think most * there are some that I'm not particularly keen on and some that I like more than others but most are quite OK

INTERVIEWER: and how about the poems that are assigned for your tutorials/

STUDENT: usually I like them * the one we had recently the one we had for this week I enjoyed it

INTERVIEWER: 'Variations'

STUDENT: 'Variations on the Word Love' * but then there are some that you don't really enjoy

INTERVIEWER: and why don't you enjoy them/

STUDENT: they're just * maybe I would disagree with the poet or I wouldn't like the way it gives its meaning * I don't know * just sometimes you read it and you say this isn't for me

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism poetry seminars/
STUDENT: * my teacher

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about that/

STUDENT: I think it's quite good because in that way we don't have * everyone doesn't have the same ones so you get thrown a different poem * and I don't know * since she's our teacher she would have more initiative to like researching each poem

more * she's the one who chose them so there's a better chance that we'll learn them best

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that you and your poems can bring poems or lyrics to class to share and discuss/

STUDENT: I would agree with that a lot because in that way a lot more people would be interested in the lesson and * it's not just one teacher who * not just one person who is choosing the poems * it's anyone * this poem can come from anywhere which is how it's going to be in the A-level itself

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about studying poetry * why do we study poetry/

STUDENT: ** I think we study it to learn * to become better at deciphering the meaning and as well to appreciate it better because once you go down a few levels and you start to see more things you'll appreciate it a lot more * I don't know really

INTERVIEWER: should we continue studying poetry in this day and age/

STUDENT: I think we should because poetry is something * a lot of people say that things of the past are just changing and going away and poetry and literature are something that basically will never be taken from us * I think it's the one thing that will stay the same for as long as it takes

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy studying poetry/

STUDENT: I think I enjoy discussing it * I'm not too keen on actually studying it because I think sometimes it's taken a bit too far and the idea that the poet put everything there on purpose * I think he put most things there on purpose but sometimes I think it's a bit insane how deeply we go into it during our lessons

INTERVIEWER: if I say poetry lesson to you what comes to mind/

STUDENT: reading a poem and studying it * I've had many teachers of poetry and there are some that choose to just dictate notes * some that choose to ask the class to give their own meaning and then discuss it * some that give general meaning and then do that * it's always been different * it's always depended on the teacher * I've had poetry lessons that I haven't enjoyed but in general it's something that has been positive

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you like about your poetry lessons/ let's start with your lectures moving on to the seminars and the tutorials

STUDENT: the lectures not so much * I wasn't so keen on the way it was set

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because I think poems are very open to interpretation and having the notes dictated to you is not really the way to go * a lot of people find it hard to understand it * understand certain bits because it would be dictated in the teacher's own words * because if you don't understand the meaning then that's it * seminars I quite enjoy because there is discussion in them but at the same time there is explanation * I quite enjoy seeing things that you didn't see from other people's perspectives and then also from things that the teacher knows about a poem

INTERVIEWER: and the tutorials/

STUDENT: the tutorials are what I enjoy the most because we discuss the poem in depth and I think that's actually where I learn the most because for me I think I learn most during discussions rather than dictation

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you don't like about your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: lectures as I said is the lack of interaction * seminars I think it's that we go way too deep sometimes * that we don't know for sure why the poet put that word there * and tutorials I don't really have that much negativity for it * I guess sometimes I find it hard to write an essay about a poem because poems are art forms that are hard to summarise in something so rigid

INTERVIEWER: what do you usually do during your poetry lessons/ let's start with your lectures on Wilfred Owen's poetry

STUDENT: well last year we had just a constant dictation of notes * our lessons were basically writing down

INTERVIEWER: and what do you usually do during a literary criticism poetry seminar/

STUDENT: discuss * and take down a few notes on the poem itself * we have the poem in front of us and we just cover it in lines and dashes and all that

INTERVIEWER: and how about tutorials/

STUDENT: in tutorials we talk and discuss it and everyone gets a chance * I think most of the people in class are shy so it's a way of giving their opinion because it would only be six people there

INTERVIEWER: do you read your essays in class/

STUDENT: sometimes * last year we used to read the entire essay out and then criticise it but this year we read parts of it and we discuss what we've written

INTERVIEWER: and why do you seem to prefer this year rather than last year/

STUDENT: because we learn more * last year we just read the essay while this year we go straight to the poem and instead of just reading I'm learning how to expand what I've already written and how to see more

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy what you usually do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: in general yes

INTERVIEWER: is there anything else that you would you like to do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: I like what you said about bringing our own poetry or lyrics and songs * I think that would be a major improvement * sometimes * not all the time because then it would be a bit too much but sometimes people could bring in research that they've done online so that perhaps we'd have other professional opinions on the poem not just our teacher's

INTERVIEWER: what are you gaining out of your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: a new understanding of poetry * I've learnt to analyse it deeper * poetry you can always read it and you can always get something from it but the more you study it the better you are at doing so

INTERVIEWER: have your poetry lessons at Junior College encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure/

STUDENT: * no they haven't because of what we already do in school but in a way they have because then I guess like in summer or when I don't have lessons I would be more interested in reading it * I started actually reading poems when we started studying them in about Form 3

INTERVIEWER: will you read poetry in the future/

STUDENT: yes yes I will * I mean not often * I mean I don't think I'll seek it out as much but if I'm suggested something or if I see something * I don't know like if the opportunity comes up I will * if I'd be interested in it

INTERVIEWER: do your teachers read poetry/

STUDENT: ** I don't know about all of them but I know one of them does for sure because she mentions it * you can tell by the way she talks about it * she's passionate about poetry and she's always like oh this reminds me of that poet or that poem

INTERVIEWER: and this teacher teaches you what/

STUDENT: crit

INTERVIEWER: and how about the teacher who taught you Wilfred Owen/

STUDENT: I have no idea because that's when we got dictated notes so there wasn't really much conversation from the teacher * I mean I got the impression that he enjoyed the poems of Wilfred Owen a lot but I couldn't say anything else

INTERVIEWER: and during your tutorials when you focus on poetry does your teacher ever say what he or she reads/

STUDENT: I think * I'm not sure * I don't think she's ever mentioned specifically that she's reading something but she does really enjoy the poetry we read and the way she talks about it she strikes me as someone who would * perhaps not as passionately as my crit teacher but she's interested in it and she does enjoy it a lot

INTERVIEWER: how important is it for your teachers to actually tell you about the poems they read/

STUDENT: I don't think it's as important to actually bring it up but the fact that they read it gives the lesson an element of actual interest * the fact that you see your teacher is enjoying what they're explaining makes a difference

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about writing poetry * have you ever written any poetry/

STUDENT: ** I think I tried it once and it came out OK but it's not really for me * I mean I enjoy writing short pieces of prose * short stories and things like that but I tried poetry once and it wasn't really like I want to try poetry now but I just started to write something and it sort of came out * I wouldn't say it was amazing and I don't know whether I'll ever do it again

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: it's just not really my thing * it has too much drama to it I think

INTERVIEWER: and how about song lyrics/ have you ever written any song lyrics/

STUDENT: no * I wish I could but I just don't have the talent

INTERVIEWER: would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

STUDENT: no I don't think that would be fair because I think the writing of poetry requires a separate talent * and some people possess it and some people don't * I know people who are clever at analyzing poetry but they suck at writing it and vice versa * so I think it would be unfair on people to make them write it

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing about poetry * what have your teachers told you to do when writing an essay about Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: to be honest I haven't had much training * I haven't learnt much on that and in fact it's something I'm having a meeting with a teacher to discuss because we

learnt a lot about the poems themselves but never really about how to explain it in the amount of words we need to

INTERVIEWER: and how about essays on unseen poems/ what have your teachers told you to do/

STUDENT: basically we've learnt a lot about how to analyse the poem properly and to set it out according to different themes * obviously you * we're always told to read it and then start to look at it bit by bit and then read it again * so first you read it in order to understand the general meaning and then look at it particularly in terms of the devices that you can talk about in your essay

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to read you a definition and then ask you a question about it * personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry/

STUDENT: no!

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: because of the examiner's reaction to it * the examiner might disagree with me and I don't want to risk my mark over a disagreement in opinion

INTERVIEWER: what do your teachers tell you about personal response/

STUDENT: they say * I've had teachers who have told us don't include it whatsoever because it can be dangerous for your mark and then teachers who have said if you feel the need include it a little but don't make your essay on what you think * sort of maybe mention it in the conclusion or something

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: [silent reading of poem] sort of * I think it describes more what we do in tutorials than anything else because there we really discuss it in such an extreme level * the emphasis isn't on feeling but on making sure that everyone understands the basic theme then structure and then use of devices and things like that

INTERVIEWER: do you feel that students tend to tie a poem to a chair and torture a confession out of it/

STUDENT: yes

INTERVIEWER: and why do they do that/

STUDENT: because they're hoping that if they really attack what's written then they'd get better marks * I think you shouldn't do it so much because you could go the wrong way and it's better to give something that's a bit more vague but correct than to give something specific that isn't

INTERVIEWER: and do your teachers adopt the attitude of the speaker in the poem/

STUDENT: not really * the majority don't

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to show you a video and I'd like you to tell me a bit more about that

STUDENT: [watches video] I think it's quite an accurate video for the poem * that's quite a bit what happens * I agree with the poet in that I feel people take it a bit too far * they don't stop and appreciate it and that's bad because you actually learn more from appreciating it than you do from analysing it too critically because every poet is different so just because you learnt that when this happened in general it means this * if you don't read it through and actually try and relate to it you won't see that maybe you're incorrect

INTERVIEWER: thanks a lot * thank you for participating in this interview

Appendix 28 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Student B

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course ** which lessons do you enjoy most out of your entire English course/ and why do you like them/

STUDENT: criticism

INTERVIEWER: criticism * prose or poetry/

STUDENT: more on the side of poetry * I enjoy both but I think I'm better at poetry and I enjoy it more

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: I always find myself easier to analyse the poetry aspect of criticism and in a way there is * I appreciate the fact that there is a lot that can be made of something that is much smaller than other texts

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

STUDENT: it depends * I vary quite a lot in what I read so books magazines whatever * it doesn't make a difference

INTERVIEWER: do you have any favourite authors or magazines in mind/

STUDENT: as far as authors go I like the works of H.P. Lovecraft and along the lines of that * Edgar Allan Poe * those kind of authors

INTERVIEWER: what do you understand by the term poetry/

STUDENT: I think poetry is an expression of feelings by an individual * written down in a creative way with a sense of structure sometimes * it doesn't have to be completely cohesive in a grammatical sense * it's more abstract than prose in the sense that * it's based around feelings instead of tangible content

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading or listening to poetry/

STUDENT: yes

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: I think it is interesting to analyse the thoughts of whatever poet might be * I don't read a lot of it but if I'm in the mood I will

INTERVIEWER: and do you have a preference/ whether it's reading it listening to it or watching it on a video

STUDENT: I think I'd rather read it myself

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: it would give me more time to analyse it however I * at my own pace basically * I think that since it's written down it would be more appropriate to read it and study it like that than to hear it

INTERVIEWER: do you read poetry for personal pleasure or for study purposes/

STUDENT: mostly for study purposes * as I said I do not * I enjoy it sometimes for personal pleasure but I study it more than I do for leisure

INTERVIEWER: any poets in mind whom you read for personal pleasure/

STUDENT: I don't really have any specific poets * I enjoy the works of Ted Hughes or maybe classics like Tennyson and Byron but I don't really have any specific poets * if I feel like reading poetry I will search any random poet that comes to mind * I don't have a list of preferences

INTERVIEWER: earlier you mentioned Edgar Allan Poe * have you ever read his poetry/

STUDENT: ** it could be I'm not sure * if I did I don't remember it

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about choice of poems * do you like all or any of Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: I like most of them * some of them I never really got around to studying in depth as in there were some lessons last year which I quite frankly got bored with so in the end I didn't really study them in much detail * but there are some which I enjoyed quite a lot

INTERVIEWER: which ones do you like/

STUDENT: 'Mental Cases' 'Disabled'

INTERVIEWER: why do you like these more than others/

STUDENT: it would probably be because of the imagery that there is * I mean 'Mental Cases' for example it has quite a particular atmosphere with the choice of words and you know with the imagery presented * it's an interesting take on shell shock victims * giving them a hellish sense of despair

INTERVIEWER: do you like all or any of the poems you read during your literary criticism poetry seminars/

STUDENT: it depends which * so far I have enjoyed almost all of them * I mean it's more based on the selected choice of the teacher so * I can't say I enjoyed all of them * I can't remember which ones I didn't enjoy but I always try to appreciate them

INTERVIEWER: and how about the poems that you are asked to write about for your tutorials/

STUDENT: ** generally I enjoy them * I do my best let's put it that way

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: the teacher himself

INTERVIEWER: what do you think about that/

STUDENT: ** I don't have a problem with it * I think that if students had to choose like a poem once a week I think that would be an interesting take because it would give students a chance to research poetry in more depth * but the way it is I don't have a problem with it * however I would like to be able to choose poems myself

INTERVIEWER: for which reason/

STUDENT: it would give me a chance to search poetry * to find poems that I like that I personally appreciate * it would help me find the kind of poetry that I enjoy most * it would also along the way help me read more poems which might help me for studying purposes

INTERVIEWER: would you restrict yourself to poetry or would you also bring in lyrics into class/

STUDENT: I think lyrics would be quite an interesting idea

INTERVIEWER: any particular band or musician whose lyrics you particularly enjoy/

STUDENT: I listen to a wide variety of artists * I don't really listen to mainstream pop music so * I don't like much of the same sounding lyrics * the lyrics I listen to it's quite varied but a few bands focus on for example the cosmos * lyrics based around space * so I like abstract kind of lyrics

INTERVIEWER: and when you read these lyrics do you consider them poetry/

STUDENT: yes of course * there's a distinction because there is the music backing it but if you had to present me with a poem and song lyrics it would be the same for me

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about studying poetry * why do we study poetry/

STUDENT: *** I think poetry might present situations of life so * or metaphors which relate to life situations so by studying it we are also in a way analysing the

feelings of situations * people who have gone through certain situations so by studying poetry we are also studying life in a way

INTERVIEWER: should we continue studying poetry in this day and age/

STUDENT: sure yes

INTERVIEWER: some people think we shouldn't * what do you think about that/

STUDENT: I think those people might be materialistically minded so they feel that we need to study things which are technological or scientific which we should as well but I think studying poetry would help us present different means of becoming intellectual in life

INTERVIEWER: you yourself do you enjoy studying poetry/

STUDENT: I do yes

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: there's no specific reason * I just enjoy the feeling I get from it * I like reading an interesting choice of words to describe something so I do enjoy the analysis aspect

INTERVIEWER: if I say poetry lesson to you what comes to mind/

STUDENT: mainly it would be the analysis aspect * reading a poem and learning what the meaning is

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you like about your poetry lessons/ let's start with your lectures moving on to the seminars and then your tutorials

STUDENT: ** to be honest last year I wasn't too happy with the lecturer I had * she got the job done yes and the explanation was very good but I didn't feel it was interesting enough * I did enjoy the poems but it wasn't my favourite lesson at all * I do enjoy the poems but the lectures not so much

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: the teacher was a bit boring for my tastes not interactive enough * a room full of students out there and the teacher just talking * it wasn't really an interactive session which I didn't find that interesting

INTERVIEWER: and how about the seminars/

STUDENT: those I enjoy a lot more * we have a good teacher I feel * the teacher makes a lot of difference * it's very interactive * the teacher tries to make it humouristic so it keeps me active * it keeps me interested * I think the teacher makes a huge difference in what my feeling towards the lesson would be

INTERVIEWER: and tutorials on poetry specifically/

STUDENT: same thing * I feel I have a good teacher so the feedback I get is very helpful so I enjoy it for that reason

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you don't like about your poetry lessons/ let's start with lectures

STUDENT: what I found to be quite boring * not just in the lectures * what I found to be a bit of a problem with the Owen lectures is that they ended up being quite monotonous * every poem has similar themes and in the end it dragged on * I think that maybe if we had a choice of poetry that was not just Wilfred Owen but there was more variety to the choices I think it would have been more interesting

INTERVIEWER: and what don't you like about the seminars/

STUDENT: nothing in particular no

INTERVIEWER: and tutorials/

STUDENT: no I can't really complain either

INTERVIEWER: so do you enjoy what you usually do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: for the most part yes

INTERVIEWER: is there anything else that you would you like to do during your poetry lessons/ I mean your lectures seminars and tutorials

STUDENT: I don't know * I think as I mentioned earlier maybe comparing lyrics that might be an interesting idea * during Owen lectures there should be more interaction * I think maybe instead of receiving a whole analysis at first hand maybe it would be more helpful for the students to analyse the poem see what they think about it and then get a conclusion from the lecturer

INTERVIEWER: what are you gaining out of your poetry lessons at Junior College/

STUDENT: ** obviously they're helping me with my criticism so * they're helping me

INTERVIEWER: if you hadn't studied poetry at Junior College what would you have missed/

STUDENT: I think the poetry classes have helped me become more insightful I suppose because obviously in order to criticise a poem you need to be insightful * so that helped me in a way * I think that's definitely the main thing * also they've helped me appreciate poetry a lot more and literature so I think that's it basically

INTERVIEWER: have your poetry lessons at Junior College encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure/

STUDENT: yes I think if I hadn't attended these lessons I wouldn't have looked up poetry for personal pleasure

INTERVIEWER: will you read poetry in the future/

STUDENT: yes I will * it would be a balance between poetry and other stuff

INTERVIEWER: do your teachers read poetry/

STUDENT: it depends which ones

INTERVIEWER: your poetry teachers

STUDENT: I wouldn't know

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: they don't mention it * I assume they would * I suppose the criticism teacher definitely would read poetry because he has to know how to handle it * my tutorial teacher I don't know * I know he reads because he often mentions books but I don't know about poetry * I don't really know sorry

INTERVIEWER: you said that he mentions books * does he ever mention poetry he's read/

STUDENT: no so far he's always mentioned novels and things like that

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea of your teachers telling you about the poems they read/

STUDENT: I think it would be quite helpful

INTERVIEWER: how/

STUDENT: well * obviously teachers have a huge influence on the students * much of my listening experience has been listening to the teachers' opinions so I think that if they had to provide such opinions about poetry they've read then it would help many students to take the initiative themselves to read more poetry

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing poetry * have you ever written any poetry/

STUDENT: yes I have

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: well I started writing when I was quite young actually * eight years old maybe even younger * I did it because I enjoyed it * it was something I felt I was good at * I enjoyed it so * and obviously it helped me with writing in general so I still do it sometimes when I'm inspired * I'm playing in a band right now so I'm writing lyrics which I would count as poetry so that helps a lot

INTERVIEWER: in fact that was a question I was going to ask you * have you written any lyrics/ have you been doing it for a long time/

STUDENT: poetry in general I've been doing it since I was quite young

INTERVIEWER: and lyrics/

STUDENT: lyrics I've been doing it here and there * but I joined my current band last June so serious song lyrics have been happening since that time I suppose

INTERVIEWER: and why did you choose to write the lyrics/

STUDENT: to be honest we don't really have a vocalist yet but I've always written lyrics on the possibility that we include them so * it's always good to have lyrics handy and it's a good way to keep the song structures present as it were

INTERVIEWER: would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

STUDENT: I think it would be very helpful

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: ** I think that maybe in the English syllabus there is not enough creative writing and maybe there's more of the analysis aspect and you know * as far as creative writing goes mainly we have the essay and that's it really * I think we should have poetry writing as well as analysis

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing about poetry * what have your teachers told you to do when writing an essay about Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: obviously ** the essay has two approaches * you can for example write three body paragraphs each one on one poem without making references to other ones or you write body paragraphs mentioning several poems throughout * obviously it has to be relevant to the title and there should be quotations and things like that basically

INTERVIEWER: and how about when writing an essay on an unseen poem/

STUDENT: well in that case there is analysis because you haven't studied it beforehand so you should take some time to actually analysing it first pointing out the devices and the message and then you should write about it * you should maybe have different paragraphs for things like tone diction and things like that

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to read you a definition and then I'm going to ask you a question * personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a

particular poet * do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry/

STUDENT: no because we're told that it is quite subjective * in the analysis of an unseen poem for example your ideas on a certain poem are perhaps not what the poet was feeling * but as long as it is accurate in terms of certain literary devices * if you analyse it in a way which is valid then it is correct

INTERVIEWER: and how do you go about doing that/

STUDENT: it depends on what the poem is * I mean there are some poems which are more clear throughout and there are some in which it's less obvious what the poet is trying to say * like last week's tutorial 'Variations on the Word Love' * I was unaware of what Margaret Atwood was trying to say in the second stanza * I wasn't sure whether she was speaking in favour of love or not * so I had to make a choice and in a way my choice was different to what the actual poem meant but the analysis was still correct in a sense because I used arguments to back it up

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: [silent reading of poem] I suppose the point of the poem would be that * what it's trying to say is that instead of finding the meaning of the poem it would be better to appreciate the abstract elements * I think it is quite similar to what happens during the lessons * I think that rather than appreciating it for what it is we do sometimes maybe try to find the ultimate meaning of the poem which might be after all wrong or ambiguous

INTERVIEWER: and why do students do that/

STUDENT: well I think most of them do it because it's what they're instructed to do by the lecturer without really appreciating it * they don't really appreciate it * for them it's a task * however I see both arguments * I see the viewpoint of Billy Collins as being accurate but I also think that what the lecturer actually does is more beneficial to the students as far as lectures go for the purposes of the exam * it's more useful * appreciating it in the way that the poet here does is also correct * it's very good obviously but I think that's more for personal gain rather than for the exam

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to show you a video and I'd like you to tell me a bit more about that

STUDENT: [watches video] I don't really feel much towards the video * I'd rather actually read a poem than watch a video like that * in a sense let me put it this way you read a book and then they make a film out of the book * if you read the book first then you have the characters in your mind * if you watch the film then when you go back to the book it's going to be biased * in the same way when you read a poem I think it's better because you can imagine whatever way you want * when you hear it being read out then the tone is particular * obviously when you read it again you're going to think of it in that tone so immediately you're going to associate it with a certain meaning * I think maybe it's a bit hypocritical for Billy Collins to first * if he made the video I'm not sure * but to write this poem then to make the video when in this poem he is saying that we should appreciate the poem without beating a confession out of it and then he makes a video which is very biased in tone towards his own poem

INTERVIEWER: thanks for participating in this interview

Appendix 29 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Student C

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * which lessons do you like most out of your entire English course/ and why do you like them/

STUDENT: I think Atwood lessons because I love the book * as in when I read it a lot of quotes like * this might sound funny * but they spoke to me * a lot of things I could relate to especially when she like dreams and stuff * obviously not that intensely but still

INTERVIEWER: how about poetry/

STUDENT: poetry depends on what type of poems because I mean Wilfred Owen I like quite a bit especially 'Dulce Decorum Est' and quite a few but then crit is a bit * I get a bit nervous studying it because * as long as I know what's coming up in the exam I feel more comfortable but crit is a bit * you don't know what's going to happen so I feel a bit anxious

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

STUDENT: * I like biographies but I also like fiction and I read *The Fault in Our Stars* recently by John Green * I couldn't put it down so I like that

INTERVIEWER: John Green was mentioned during yesterday's lesson

STUDENT: yes most of my friends are big fans of John Green

INTERVIEWER: I'll make sure to actually read his work * what do you understand by the term poetry/

STUDENT: I understand it to mean like people expressing emotions * because you can't really lie when you're writing a poem * it's raw feelings on a page * and basically snippets of life * like we had a tutorial this week on Atwood's poem 'Variations on the Word Love' * I actually became a fan of Margaret Atwood [laughs] * she gives snippets of life and it's very you know * it's good to be able to relate to someone over their work

INTERVIEWER: do you consider lyrics to be poetry/

STUDENT: yes!

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because poetry in essence is a song basically * it has rhyme it has rhythm * it has you know * lyrics is just putting music to the poem * I think

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading or listening to poetry/

STUDENT: I prefer reading to poetry because if I listen to something I just get a bit confused and I want to read it myself and see what I've missed during the reading so I prefer reading it

INTERVIEWER: are there any poets whose work you enjoy reading/

STUDENT: I mostly read at school in that I'm not going to say I have a poetry book on my desk for leisure * recently I was reading *Divina Commedia* in English [laughs] * and I really liked that * I haven't actually read it all yet because it's really long and it was around 11 at night but I really liked it * and e.e. cummings * I like his style

INTERVIEWER: and how about lyrics/ whose lyrics do you enjoy reading in particular/

STUDENT: ** Hello Saferide I really like * She's Swedish * it's very like contemporary * not actually contemporary as it actually goes against that but it has a modern style which you don't * I don't know you don't really find it * it's quirky so I like it * the words are good * there's a song in which she asks her boyfriend a number of questions * I really like it

INTERVIEWER: do you read poetry for personal pleasure or for study purposes/

STUDENT: mostly study purposes * but I'm also finding poems that I really like through studying so then I look them up and look up his works * but mostly the poetry that you study in school would be their best work so it's very hard to find something that lives up to it

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about choice of poems * do you like all or any of Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: ** I like I like * I wouldn't say a lot of it but there are some poems which after reading them I need to be a bit silent after a while because I mean it's very overwhelming * the poems I think I like most are 'Dulce Decorum Est' and 'Disabled' * because I mean I can * not relate to the person in 'Disabled' but relate to the feeling of maybe wanting to be known and maybe you like sympathising with him because it turned out really really badly for him * and I like the 'Chances' too

INTERVIEWER: any particular reason/

STUDENT: too pessimistic but it just shows you the intensity of war because there are so many things that can happen * bad things * I think I think comparing all the outcomes I think the best would be death because you're not really you know experiencing you know the heartache of it anymore

INTERVIEWER: do you like all or any of the poems you read during your literary criticism poetry seminars/

STUDENT: no because as in crit I try quite a bit to actually understand what the poem is about and like there was one in particular 'The Design' and I completely didn't understand it * after she explained to us it was OK but until the explanation was explained [laughs] * I was lost * because you can sense that there is a deeper meaning but I mean * you think and it doesn't stick to the description so the whole time I was thinking what if I had this poem in the exam

INTERVIEWER: so how would you describe these poems/ I mean the ones you do during your literary criticism seminars

STUDENT: ** I mean they're not all the same so I don't think I can describe them by means of an adjective or put them into one category ** I mean * they are a bit confusing as in they don't go straight to the point and I know there is a purpose for that since you want to describe something which people take as insignificant as something that everyone thinks about * like fate or destiny or you know a greater being which is quite intelligent * but but I think people would understand it more I mean people would get the grasp if they put it there and they made sure that the message would get through to people ** I think it's good that she gives us confusing poems because if we go for the exam and we find this poem is completely unreadable or not unreadable but like you can't understand what it's trying to say * I think we're better prepared for it so in a way I mean it's good but in a way I feel like ripping my hair out most of the time

INTERVIEWER: and how about the poems that you write about for your tutorials/

STUDENT: ** no I think they're much better than the ones we do in crit * like I really liked 'Variations on the Word Love' * it has the meaning in it even the way she sees the world you know and mistaking it for something else * it's true so I like it * it's the kind of thing I'd read

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: no the teacher does

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about that/

STUDENT: I think it's good because we're a bit lazy so if we had to choose ourselves we would choose an easy one so probably it's better if she chooses them herself

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that students might be encouraged to bring in poems or lyrics to share with their classmates/

STUDENT: no I think that's quite a good idea * I think more than in crit it should be like an actual out of school activity * I mean in school but not a lesson because I mean it's good for like poetry lovers and song lovers and to actually get to discuss it * I mean it's better than just thinking about writing about stuff * it's important to think about it but I also think it's important to discuss it in a group and actually find more meanings and actually discover more about the words

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about studying poetry * why do we study poetry/

STUDENT: [laughs] ** I think to actually discover more about life in general since poems are about everything so you can have Shakespeare sonnets about time love death * it's very vast so discovering life would be good [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: some people think that we shouldn't study poetry at school * what do you think about this/

STUDENT: no I think people should study poetry at school because I mean it like broadens horizons you know in a way like * for thought * because it does have a lot of in depth thought in it and some people don't think enough

INTERVIEWER: should we continue studying poetry in this day and age/

STUDENT: yes * I think it's very important

INTERVIEWER: any particular reason for that/

STUDENT: for the reasons I gave before * because a lot of people can understand emotions and even though we know it's there but we don't really regard it * for example the commercialisation of love * we know it's there but we don't really think about it * how people exploit each other * so it makes you think about such things

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy studying poetry/

STUDENT: yes I do

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because very rarely you come across a poem that actually speaks to you and like can * you think the writer is actually talking about you in a way that you can't really describe yourself * I think it's quite special

INTERVIEWER: if I say poetry lesson to you what comes to mind/

STUDENT: Shakespeare

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because he wrote like a lot of poetry and I mean his works are basically carved in stone and will remain forever and he was quite right in what he said in his poetry

INTERVIEWER: and the word lesson/ poetry lesson/ what does that evoke in your mind/

STUDENT: I don't know as in I've always had good teachers for poetry so it's not really a bad feeling * I mean I've always had teachers who love teaching you know English and poetry in general so I can't really say that it brings out a bad feeling or bad memories

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you like about your poetry lessons/ let's start with your lectures then go to your seminars and your tutorials

STUDENT: poetry lectures are a bit more like technical like I mean you have to actually get through a syllabus so I mean you have to do the poems and I mean like Wilfred Owen you have the feelings but you can't really say what your opinion is in class because you have a time constraint but then in the seminars it gets better because you're actually participating with people and you're able to talk about your feelings or opinions towards that particular poem * and tutorials are even better because you actually discuss your opinion through essays in further detail so you actually help each other I think

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you don't like about your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: ** obviously with lectures on Wilfred Owen there are poems that you have to do as in you can't actually choose not to so if you don't like the poem you just have to continue writing notes about it * but seminars I don't know it's basically the same thing of feeling a bit anxious about the exam * you get a poem that can't understand * and tutorials they're OK * they're quite good so

INTERVIEWER: and what do you usually do during your poetry lessons/ starting with your lectures

STUDENT: with Wilfred Owen I don't know basically we listen to the poem and he explains the meaning and the themes

INTERVIEWER: when you say listen to the poem * an audio recording/ the teacher reading it out/

STUDENT: no he actually reads it out * I can't remember a time in which he didn't do it actually * and we go over it and he points out the metaphors and the poetic devices the important ones at least * and we connect them to the meaning

INTERVIEWER: are you ever invited to read it out/

STUDENT: no

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about that/

STUDENT: I think I'd be nervous to read it out * just because the language might be a bit different and I might stumble up

INTERVIEWER: and how about seminars/ what goes on in the seminars/

STUDENT: * basically we're given a poem and the teacher reads it out * we usually get a few minutes to discuss it between us like in pairs or threes * we write notes * she asks for opinions which I think is very good because we interact rather than being spoon-fed

INTERVIEWER: and tutorials/

STUDENT: we usually read out our criticism

INTERVIEWER: your essays you mean/

STUDENT: yes * and then the teacher tells us what we did good and what we did wrong and he tries to focus on this * like if we got imagery wrong he tries to explain imagery and why we got it wrong * if it's about style he tries to explain that

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy what you usually do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: I usually enjoy it * it can be a bit * I wouldn't want to say boring during tutorials because you have to hear the same thing being repeated for nine times until everyone has a chance to read their essays * but it's good like to get feedback * it's good to actually read out your work and get an opinion on it

INTERVIEWER: is there anything else that you would you like to do during your poetry lessons/ for example during your lectures seminars and tutorials

STUDENT: I'd actually like to try * I mean if everyone could get a poem from home or something that they really like or lyrics or something * it would be pretty good * and to see other people's interests in poetry and see what they like and actually if they're our age then the likelihood that we're going to like it is greater than if the teacher picks it out

INTERVIEWER: and what would you like to do with it if you bring some lyrics to class or a poem/ what would you like to do with the group/

STUDENT: I'd like to discuss it * I mean poetry is there to be understood and discussed so * a lot of people in my class have interesting things to say about literature so I'd like to discuss it

INTERVIEWER: what are you gaining out of your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: I think the technique to actually understand better * like you don't miss anything any more * like if * no comma * like you start seeing that no comma is out of place and it all like contributes to the main theme * so it's interesting to see how the poet himself or herself put in so much into that piece of writing including structure and I mean the style and everything to make it work together like a little machine

INTERVIEWER: do your lessons help you in any way with your own reading of poetry and lyrics for pleasure/

STUDENT: yes they do help me * they've made me appreciate poetry a bit more because it is a lot of work to write a poem a sonnet in iambic pentameter and it's you know it makes you appreciate it

INTERVIEWER: have your poetry lessons at Junior College encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure/

STUDENT: it did * I've started searching poems of Shakespeare * I had tried in the past but it was a bit too much for me * and even if you get a poem you go and look for others by the same poet

INTERVIEWER: will you continue reading poetry in the future/

STUDENT: yes obviously * if I have time [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: do your teachers read poetry/

STUDENT: yes * my crit teacher has a poetry club so she's quite into that

INTERVIEWER: and how about the others/

STUDENT: I don't know

INTERVIEWER: besides your crit teacher have your other teachers spoken about the poetry they read/ or shared their interest in poetry with you/

STUDENT: the teacher of Wilfred Owen no because as I've said I don't really blame him because of time constraints * but the tutorial has made references to other poems

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing poetry * have you ever written any poetry/

STUDENT: yes

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: I don't know * I've been writing poetry since I was young * I mean I wouldn't say good poetry but it got better as the years went along * since I was around nine because * well it actually started because my cousin gave me a notebook and I had to do a little like assignment for class * we had to write a poem about our hands and * my poem didn't rhyme and I showed it to my grandpa and he said that good poems should rhyme * so I made it rhyme and I liked it and I started writing poems

INTERVIEWER: and how about lyrics/ have you ever written any lyrics/

STUDENT: I used to because I had a little piano but I don't anymore

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: [laughs] because I don't have the piano anymore * it was electric

INTERVIEWER: would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

STUDENT: to be honest I prefer writing prose * I never got the hang of rhythm * actual beats and sounds * I tried but gave up

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that the creative writing of poetry should be taught at Junior College/

STUDENT: ** I think it's actually a very good idea because there are like a few who would want to write poetry professionally and actually get the hang of writing it in a particular way which is quite hard to do * but then there are people who won't find it interesting

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: I think because * some because they don't like poetry * because they don't feel the need to write it * I've never actually spoken to these people and I don't have any particular people in mind * I just think that there might be different views on this

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing about poetry * what have your teachers told you to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: ** I think just to mention the main theme and obviously anything that you * that catches your eye * and to bring out what Wilfred Owen is trying to say in the poem like the pity of war and the sacrifices that they made and the love for others * so I think that's what they told us

INTERVIEWER: and how about when writing an essay on an unseen poem/ what have your teachers told you to do/

STUDENT: read it again and again and again [laughs] * but to relate structure and form to the content * I think that's quite important because a lot of poetry doesn't have a random structure * usually it's thought out * I mean a lot of poets like to relate their structure to the theme

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to read you a definition * listen to it and then I'm going to ask you a question about it * personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry/

STUDENT: I try not show my personal response * like in the conclusion yes * it would be quite personal on a personal level but I wouldn't say in my opinion

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: I don't know * I just see it a bit clichéd * like I don't want the examiner to penalise me for that

INTERVIEWER: and what do your teachers tell you to do/ do they tell you to include your personal response or to leave it out/

STUDENT: I don't know * I've never really asked that question * I've always written it like that so teachers haven't really commented about it

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: [silent reading of poem] yes I think I've read this last year in crit ** I think with some poems that's what actually happens * since the teacher already knows the meaning * I mean I don't know if it's like this but I don't think they realise how hard it is for students to understand what the words are trying to say * I mean once it's explained to them it's quite obvious * like you're not going to forget it easily and once you see the poem again you can relate it with its meaning * but if you've never seen it before you can't really decipher what it's about * and a lot of students are taught to over think it so I mean they go into like in depth meanings which are not like entirely true * and then the opposite when it comes to poems with in depth meanings they look at them from the surface so it's quite true

INTERVIEWER: do you think that students tie the poem to a chair and torture it/ does this happen during your lessons/

STUDENT: probably [laughs] * I think with poetry we don't enjoy it * we just think about the exam and poetry is meant to be enjoyed so I think we get frustrated because of that * and it's basically * at least I get a bit frustrated when I can't understand it so I mean I start like sort of take it piece by piece and a poem you have to take it as a whole * so I think yes that happens

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to show you a video and I'd like you to tell me a bit more about that

STUDENT: [watches video] I think it's more intense when you hear it out loud * yes I think it's true I mean I mean poems are there to be appreciated because I mean most of the time when they are really beautiful and a lot of people students take it for granted sometimes * even the work that's put into a poem but I mean it's quite frustrating when you can't understand it and you're thinking in three months' time I'm going to be looking at a poem in my exam so

INTERVIEWER: is that why students tie it to a chair and torture it/

STUDENT: I think so * I mean I mean it's a matter of I can't understand it and it becomes a matter of I want to you know so you're going to do everything you can to actually understand it and take it apart piece by piece

INTERVIEWER: thank you * thanks a lot for participating in this interview

Appendix 30 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Student D

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * which lessons do you like most out of your entire English course/

STUDENT: Wilfred Owen

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: I like war poetry a lot * it's my favourite poetry

INTERVIEWER: how about the literary criticism of poetry/

STUDENT: literary criticism I find a bit hard * analysing it is OK but when it comes to writing it down * it's not one of my favourite subjects

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

STUDENT: for prose I prefer either biographies or maybe something related to war * poetry I like something real

INTERVIEWER: such as/ do you have any poets in mind/

STUDENT: I like Shakespeare because he wrote about real feelings not soppy feelings * I don't like modern poetry

INTERVIEWER: when you're relaxing and you want to read something for pleasure what do you usually go for/

STUDENT: fiction

INTERVIEWER: any favourite authors/

STUDENT: Faulks * for example *Birdsong* * it's real * if I had to read something which was just for pleasure I would go for such books

INTERVIEWER: what do you understand by the term poetry/

STUDENT: poetry in my opinion is like a form of art * you can express yourself through it but it has a sense of musicality and structure * it's organised * it's art in my opinion

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading or listening to poetry/

STUDENT: listening more than reading

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: sometimes when I listen to it * the way you listen to something is different * you interpret it differently

INTERVIEWER: is there a difference between listening and reading a poem/

STUDENT: yes

INTERVIEWER: a difference in what however/

STUDENT: because if I read it I'm trying to understand it * if I'm listening to it I listen to maybe the rhythm the rhyme scheme * I don't listen to these things when I'm reading it * when I listen to it I can hear it well

INTERVIEWER: do you read poetry for personal pleasure or for study purposes/

STUDENT: personal pleasure * my mum used to like to read poetry to me so I kept on reading it * for example if I'm tired but not exhausted I have books I go through looking for the right kind of poetry

INTERVIEWER: you mentioned Shakespeare * do you have any other favourite poets/

STUDENT: ** Robert Frost * I like 'Fire and Ice' for example * it's a short poem but there is a lot of meaning in it

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about choice of poems * do you like all or any of Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: not all of them

INTERVIEWER: which ones do you like in particular/

STUDENT: I like S.I.W. * there's a lot of imagery * but I don't like for example 'The Sentry' * I don't know * it doesn't really appeal to me * it's about his personal guilt and I can't relate to that * I can relate to something you're forced to do maybe * something like 'Disabled' where there's pressure I can relate to * but 'The Show' 'The Last Laugh' those not really

INTERVIEWER: do you like all or any of the poems you read during your literary criticism poetry seminars/

STUDENT: I don't like any of them except last lesson * we did 'Another Dark Lady' and I sort of like that because of Shakespeare's sonnets * but other poems no

INTERVIEWER: why don't you like them/

STUDENT: ** I think she chooses a certain theme * it's unexpected * she gives us poems I can't relate to

INTERVIEWER: and how about the poems that you have to write about for your tutorials/

STUDENT: not all I guess * the last one we had was 'Variations on the Word Love' * what Atwood writes is true * it's about the commercialising of love but I didn't like it * I wouldn't write a poem about it * there were some which I liked but nothing memorable

INTERVIEWER: why don't you like the poems for your tutorials/

STUDENT: they don't mean anything * the subject isn't something I like * for example the Atwood poem is about the commercialism of love * everyone is selling love * but it doesn't mean anything

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: the teacher

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about that/

STUDENT: I'd rather we could discuss it maybe * not for example we want to do that poem but maybe a specific era or a particular genre * she chooses the poems and I find it a bit ** not unfair but it isn't as good as when you like it maybe * but then in the exam you don't know what's coming up so it's good practice

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that you might be encouraged to bring in poems to discuss with your friends/ or lyrics for example

STUDENT: you actually know a lot about the poem if you had to present it to the class so maybe others who are listening you can help * but not lyrics

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: I don't think that lyrics are poetry * they're just commercialism * unless it was a poem and they put it into a song * I don't like lyrics

INTERVIEWER: who are your favourite musicians/

STUDENT: Queen

INTERVIEWER: and do you actually read the lyrics that they've written

STUDENT: no!

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: they don't mean anything * lyrics are just I have a song I have the music and I've made the lyrics to go with that * and this rhymes with that and it sounds good so it's good * if you listen to music some of it doesn't even make sense

INTERVIEWER: so in your mind there's a big difference between poetry and lyrics

STUDENT: yes * I don't like lyrics

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about studying poetry * why do we study poetry/

STUDENT: not everybody likes poetry * and it maybe opens their minds to new things to try at least * if you try to go to university without a knowledge of poetry of anything not just poetry * you'd have a disadvantage over someone who likes poetry or reads a lot

INTERVIEWER: should we continue studying poetry in this day and age/

STUDENT: yes

INTERVIEWER: some people think we shouldn't * what do you think about that/

STUDENT: I don't think we shouldn't * we probably have an advantage over those who don't * we can maybe listen analyse things more * see things that other people can't see maybe * not over analyse but maybe see what the poet wanted to mean by what he wrote

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy studying poetry/

STUDENT: yes I do

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: poetry * I like things which have a sense of musicality to them * I think it deserves to be appreciated * I like the sound of things * I don't just go for what they meant specifically but also the way it's written what were they thinking when they used that instead of that

INTERVIEWER: if I say poetry lesson to you what comes to mind/

STUDENT: ** Wilfred Owen probably * criticism is the last thing that comes to mind

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: I don't like it! * I over analyse * when we did 'Another Dark Lady' I kept mentioning Shakespeare and I had to stay within the lines of 'Another Dark Lady' so I don't like that we have limitations * for Wilfred Owen she gave us meanings she gave us themes and she explained them but you could relate this poem to another poem and they mean the same thing so you can't actually go outside the borderline

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you like about your poetry lessons/ let's start with your lectures moving on to the seminars and finally your tutorials

STUDENT: I had a really good teacher last year for Wilfred Owen * she used to get into the poem * she didn't just teach ** she made you feel what she was trying to say * she explained every detail and you understood every poem well * she was one of my favourite teachers * for seminars I think it's just analysing for the sake of

analysing * you're not trying to understand what they said * it's just a poem analyse it

INTERVIEWER: and your tutorials/

STUDENT: she explains everything and she complains about each and every one of us that we don't know how to write but she said that she's going to give us help with the essays * I think she's helping * however I prefer last year

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you don't like about your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: ** we had twenty Owen poems or even more * I think I don't like it that we had twenty and she talked a lot about these twenty * I think I'd rather have more options * she'd give us details but she repeated the same things over and over

INTERVIEWER: and how about your seminars/ is there anything you don't like about them/

STUDENT: the choice of poems * I don't like what she chooses

INTERVIEWER: and your tutorials/

STUDENT: ** I think the way she tackles it * I don't like the fact that we have to read our essay in front of everyone

INTERVIEWER: why don't you like that/

STUDENT: because if I come up with a stupid point I don't want everyone to know * and I usually do that so it's a bit embarrassing

INTERVIEWER: and what do you usually do during your poetry lessons/ let's start with your lectures

STUDENT: the teacher first reads the poem and then she tells us the major themes and then we start going through it line by line and she tells us why he used this word and effect that word has on the poem * what he wanted to bring out * and she then gives us notes and background * which helps

INTERVIEWER: and what happens during poetry seminars/

STUDENT: we analyse a poem for a whole hour which I don't like and then she asks us to write an essay on the other poem we didn't analyse [laughs] * but the way she analyses it is really good * I can't complain about that

INTERVIEWER: and during a tutorial what happens/

STUDENT: same thing basically since we have the same teacher * we obviously read it out and if she sees that we didn't fully understand the poem she explains it tells us what we missed what points we should focus on the good things we did

INTERVIEWER: and do you enjoy what you usually do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: yes * mainly because we study the war poems * I had actually read some of them for my O-level * unfortunately they weren't the ones I liked but still

INTERVIEWER: is there anything else that you would you like to do during your poetry lessons/ during your lectures seminars and tutorials

STUDENT: maybe discuss it * we never actually discuss it * it's just the teacher telling us what the poem consists of * but I think discussion makes sure that you've understood it well

INTERVIEWER: during all three kinds of lesson/

STUDENT: yes * it's good for every lesson

INTERVIEWER: what are you gaining out of your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: *****

INTERVIEWER: if you hadn't studied poetry at Junior College what would you have missed/

STUDENT: I think I wouldn't have known how to analyse a poem how to look at it and fully appreciate it * I think it's good that they included poetry

INTERVIEWER: have your poetry lessons at Junior College encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure/

STUDENT: yes! ** the good thing about not knowing what poem you're going to study is that if you study this poem and you like it you can actually look up other poems by the same poet * and read more works

INTERVIEWER: will you continue reading poetry in the future/

STUDENT: yes! * I've always read poetry and I will continue reading poetry * my lessons have encouraged me to read more because without them I think I would have said I don't have time I have other things to do * but no I think these lessons helped me appreciate them more

INTERVIEWER: do your teachers read poetry/

STUDENT: yes

INTERVIEWER: how do you know/

STUDENT: she always tells us read this * it's a really good book * she tells what they're about and I don't like that because if I'm going to read it then I don't want to know what it's about * but yes she reads poetry

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about that/

STUDENT: it's good because maybe if you look at a book you don't really know if it's good or not * having suggestions and an opinion from someone who actually knows good poetry is better

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing poetry * have you ever written any poetry/

STUDENT: yes

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: ** I like writing * but I write poetry just to express something that I couldn't express in writing prose * I write when I can't have any other alternative * when the feelings are just for poetry * it's a means of expression

INTERVIEWER: have you ever written any lyrics/

STUDENT: no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: it's not my thing * I think if you had to write lyrics first you have to have the music * I do write music but I don't want words with it * the music expresses everything I need so lyrics aren't necessary

INTERVIEWER: you play the piano don't you/

STUDENT: yes and I've written pieces for the piano but if I'm going to write for the piano I write something where the music expresses everything I need * I don't need the lyrics to dictate what I want to say

INTERVIEWER: would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

STUDENT: I think it would be a bit hard but ** I think it would be better

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because not everybody has the guts I guess to sit down and write something * maybe when you have not poets but teachers who are encouraging you it's better maybe * they would probably show you how to start and it would help

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing about poetry * what have your teachers told you to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: to focus on language imagery how he uses the poem * for example 'Dulce Decorum Est' * to show to enhance * the * not propaganda * how it forced people to join the war * and in S.I.W. the imagery in it

INTERVIEWER: and how about when writing an essay on an unseen poem/ what have your teachers told you to do then/

STUDENT: ** don't over analyse it [laughs] * but they said to read and to show why he used that word instead of another word * my teacher said that * for example Shakespeare always had perfect poems * he used a word on purpose * he never just said I'm just going to use this word just because it's the first word that came to mind * it took a lot to think of it * so they told us to see the diction used again imagery tone versification

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to read you a definition and then I'm going to ask you a question about it * personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry/

STUDENT: in the conclusion

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because it's about what the poet wanted to write * you can include your opinion but I wouldn't focus on my opinion * because maybe what you say is wrong * I think it's best to just leave it for the conclusion

INTERVIEWER: do your teachers encourage you to include your personal response/

STUDENT: they tell us to leave it for the conclusion not in a body paragraph

INTERVIEWER: and why do they say that/

STUDENT: never bothered to ask [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: [silent reading of poem] no! * I don't think so * this part it's like being forced to analyse everything but I don't think it's that extreme * I think this is taking it a bit too extreme * but sometimes it does feel like that * that you have to see what he meant * but if you can back it up you can try to come up with an interpretation and it's not forced * torture a confession out of it is too much

INTERVIEWER: it's too extreme * do any students do that however/

STUDENT: I think so

INTERVIEWER: and why do they do that/

STUDENT: it's maybe because they want to come up with an interpretation at all costs * a lot of people over interpret it

INTERVIEWER: and your teacher does he or she adopt the attitude mentioned at the beginning of the poem/

STUDENT: no

INTERVIEWER: so what kind of attitude do they adopt/

STUDENT: she gives us a bit of background about the poem * and then she really goes into it

INTERVIEWER: when you say goes into it meaning what/

STUDENT: I think she chooses poetry she likes or at least she knows a lot about * so she tells us for example this poem is because he went through that and she doesn't choose poetry randomly

INTERVIEWER: does she tie the poem to a chair and torture it/

STUDENT: no but she does tell us to look at every word he uses * it isn't torture though * it's analysing it

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to show you a video and I'd like you to tell me a bit more about that

STUDENT: [watches video] when reading it I personally didn't understand everything but listening to it made it easier for me to understand * but that's always what happens to me when I listen to it * it's easier for me * like I said they tell us never to over analyse and torture it but sometimes you do end up doing that especially if it's a poem you don't like * you have to try to find its meaning * you're forcing an interpretation out of yourself * so sometimes yes but not always

INTERVIEWER: thank you for participating in this interview

Appendix 31 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Student E

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * which lessons do you like most out of your entire English course/

STUDENT: I think poetry because I can relate a lot to poetry books and that's why I've chosen languages in the first place because they allow you to be artistic and allow your imaginative roots to develop * I think poetry is nice because you are able to understand * different perspectives of different subjects * not like maths where you can't really give your opinion and understand * like for example in the last poetry crit we had for tutorial * 'Variations on the Word Love' * I really enjoyed doing it because I started to realise that we have certain perceptions of words and concepts that are really close minded and are really superficial

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

STUDENT: I like reading biographies * I like reading books which are also very spiritual like Paolo Coelho * I really like *The Alchemist* * I like also reading books about abuse * children abuse like David Pelzer

INTERVIEWER: what do you understand by the term poetry/

STUDENT: ** I think poetry is a means through which poets make something which is perhaps not that beautiful appear beautiful because there is poetry in which the poet is expressing certain sad emotions and he manages to transform them into something really beautiful * I think that's what impresses me

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading or listening to poetry/

STUDENT: yes * honestly I don't do it a lot for personal pleasure * I don't really open up a book and start reading poetry but I come from a very poetry oriented family * even though my father's an accountant we all like poetry and languages so I've always enjoyed listening to poetry and plays and stuff * but sometimes I like to find a poem and read it and if I really like I go to my mother or my sister and tell her look at this

INTERVIEWER: and how about lyrics/ do you enjoy reading song lyrics/

STUDENT: *** I have a friend and she always tells me how come you know all they lyrics of all the songs * and I feel like if you don't know the lyrics of the songs that you hear and whatever I think it's like futile listening to the song * not futile exactly because there's still the musicality the melody * they all contribute to making the song beautiful * but I think the lyrics are special because * I mean not this commercial stuff we listen to nowadays because it's rubbish * but music like for example John Mayer I don't know whether you've ever heard of him * John Mayer John Miles * the lyrics are so powerful that you can keep listening to it every day and you won't get tired of it

INTERVIEWER: do you consider lyrics to be poetry/

STUDENT: yes I think so * I think not all lyrics are poetry because as I've said some of it is rubbish but yes some lyrics are poetry

INTERVIEWER: so for lyrics to be poetry what do they need to have/

STUDENT: I don't think they need to have words which are really difficult or really hard to comprehend * I think that they need to be written in an artistic manner * I think that's poetry * it's an art a beautiful art that is done through words * like for example ballet is done through dancing * it's an art which you express through your body * I think poetry you express it through beautiful words

INTERVIEWER: do you read poetry for personal pleasure or for study purposes/

STUDENT: for study purposes * when we have crit for tutorials and poetry essays I love it * I enjoy it * I find it difficult to criticise a poem because unfortunately last year we had a teacher who was rubbish but this year I have a really good teacher and she's really good at analysing poems so I can more understand what the poet is trying to say how he's trying to say it * but I think if I had more time I would read more poetry at home

INTERVIEWER: are there any poets that you particularly enjoy reading/

STUDENT: ** I don't have a wide range of poets that I can say I like that because of this or that * so I can't exactly give you anything on that but for example that one by Margaret Atwood I really enjoyed it

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about choice of poems * do you like all or any of Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: I like his work because it's impressive how that man was able to write such beautiful poetry * it's impressive because in poetry you transfer your thoughts on paper and I find that difficult to do * I find it hard to express myself when I'm

talking sometimes let alone when writing it * I mean sometimes the thoughts are not clear in our heads like the Zinsser text we were doing yesterday * and like there is so much confusion and that's why I think Owen is such a brilliant poet because he was in such confusion and he managed to write it in such a detailed and precise manner

INTERVIEWER: which poems in particular do you enjoy/

STUDENT: 'Mental Cases' I like a lot * 'Mental Cases' is great * 'Dulce Decorum' * I like 'Dulce Decorum' because I've been listening to it and analysing it since I was in Form 3 and I now can understand it and grasp it well because I've been listening to it so much

INTERVIEWER: and how about the poems that you do during your literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: I like most of them * I mean [teacher's name] chooses poems which I think she does it on purpose which we can relate to which we can find interesting but sometimes chooses poetry which is rather difficult to comprehend and she does it I think on purpose because there are things which we can't comprehend and which we still have to understand and analyse * but I like most of them yes

INTERVIEWER: and how about last year during crit/

STUDENT: last year I used to find crit easy and everyone used to tell me it's really hard and I used to find it easy because I had a teacher which was really bad and now I'm finding it very hard this year but * we used to do poem after poem and analysing it in the way I used to analyse poems in Form 4 * like find an alliteration find a metaphor * these things I know them by heart * but if I had to compare this year's poems with last year's I would say that last year's were completely different

INTERVIEWER: so what's so different/

STUDENT: because this year we analyse it more in a way that my mind is knowing knows what it's doing * like this year [teacher's name] * I used to when I used to do poetry I used to try to see what the poem is trying to say OK * and she always used to tell us don't explain the poem * the examiner knows what the poem is about * and last year's teacher used to tell me a lot about mirroring the poet's thoughts * for example if * if there's a lot of free verse that might mirror that the poet could not * that his thoughts were constantly going on and he couldn't put them in order and so he doesn't use punctuation * and this year when I gave in my first crit essay [teacher's name] told me you have these farfetched ideas and it wasn't just me because we all came from the same teacher from last year * she told me you have

these farfetched ideas which are in fact not so good you know * there are things which are easier to analyse that you can put them more on paper * so this year she helped me to stop looking at these farfetched philosophical ideas and try to focus on things which I already know like metaphors * and this has had an effect on me and it's why I'm enjoying poetry this year

INTERVIEWER: how about the poems that you do for your tutorials/

STUDENT: yes I think I find the tutorial poems more interesting because usually during poetry crit they're much more difficult * not much more difficult but it's difficult to comprehend the poems that [teacher's name] chooses * usually the poetry crit in our tutorials are more interesting and include stuff which we can relate to more like love

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: [teacher's name]

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about that/

STUDENT: I think that the fact it is only her choice is in a way a disadvantage because it's like it's only her point of view but I think if the teachers had to compile a set of poems together since everyone has different views the choice would be more vast

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that students might be encouraged to share poems and lyrics that they'd like to discuss with their classmates/

STUDENT: I think for the syllabus honestly I think that me and the other students are not capable of choosing poems * not not capable but we don't know the certain standards that we have to reach * the lecturers know the standards that we have to reach and they know how difficult a poem needs to be for us * so that we can be ready for the exam but I think if we * for example [teacher's name] she has this group that meets for poetry after school and she allows students to bring their own poetry to bring their own poems that perhaps they've written themselves * I think that would be interesting but I don't think it's something that should happen in class during the seminars because I mean we enjoy doing poetry but it's syllabus you know * the exam's our main focus * I mean OK perhaps once in a while she should tell us perhaps I think to get something so that there is the perspective of students involved * what we think about certain issues what are the subjects we'd like to talk about most * but I think that mostly the focus should be on things that she chooses because she knows what we need to do

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about studying poetry * why do we study poetry/

STUDENT: ** I think sometimes many students including myself have the perception that we study poetry for exam purposes * it is for exam purposes but I think poetry is much more than for exam purposes * I think poetry is something which is really insightful and really deep and that a poet writes a poem because he wants to express an emotion he wants to tell a story and when someone writes a poem he writes it because it is so important for him this emotion this story this idea that he needs to put it down on paper * because like Shakespeare said * even though I don't always agree with him * he says that yet in time my verse shall stand and that is so true because poetry * I mean look at Shakespeare Wilfred Owen they died so many years ago and we're here studying their works

INTERVIEWER: should we continue studying poetry in this day and age/

STUDENT: yes definitely * I think that if we don't study poetry anymore * I don't know it's like * a piece of the human art human originality is lost

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy studying poetry/

STUDENT: yes a lot * I think that poetry and prose are the things I enjoy the most unlike grammar

INTERVIEWER: if I say poetry lesson to you what comes to mind/

STUDENT: analysing a poem in detail * which is difficult sometimes

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you like about your poetry lessons/ let's start with your lectures moving on to the seminars and your tutorials

STUDENT: poetry for example last year during Wilfred Owen my teacher used to use a lot of poignant terminology which used to really affect me * the lecture was at 8 am in the morning and she used to keep me there listening to her always * I mean the themes of Owen's poetry are basically all the same but she used to keep me there for every poem because it was so poignant * seminars I like them because unlike the lectures of Wilfred Owen in which the teacher explained to us * we didn't really have time to tell our opinion of that poem * but during the seminars that's why it's nice because we we we can say what we think about it we can look at it from our own perspective * that's why I think it's nice because when we read a poem you analyse it from your own background you know * for example if I read a poem about love I can relate to it in a different manner because you're a married man and I'm not you know * during tutorials it also makes a difference * it also makes a difference who's your lecturer * for example [teacher's name] I could sit there and listen to him talking for

the rest of my life because he talks in such a * he looks outside the window and he seems to get the answer I don't know from where and that really impresses me * that's why it's really nice that we have different teachers teaching us poetry because they all teach us in a different manner * for example I do ballet and I have different teachers almost everyday and that's what's really nice because they teach you in their artistic manner * if for example a teacher has a different background or comes from a different family he teaches you in a different way than someone who has been taught and has been brought up in a like different way

INTERVIEWER: and how about your tutorials/

STUDENT: yes I enjoy them * [teacher's name] teaches us during our tutorials and he makes us see beyond and that's what's we're meant to do * we're meant to look beyond the words the surface level * but he does it in a way that * I mean we're still learning and sometimes our train of thought doesn't go so far but because he's read so much because he's been taught so much he can do that he can teach us how to do it

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you don't like about your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: ** I don't think that with regards to poetry there is something that really annoys or that I don't like * the only thing I don't like in English is grammar * I really hate it * but with regards to poetry I don't think that there's something * I mean I was really angry when I started this year because I realised that there were a lot of things I didn't cover last year which I should have covered and I was really annoyed because now I'm finding it really difficult you know and I think if I had had a better teacher last year * I think it's not the poetry itself * I think it's the way the lecture is conducted that I didn't like last year

INTERVIEWER: and what do you usually do during your poetry lessons/ let's start with your lectures

STUDENT: during Wilfred Owen she tells us to find for example 'Dulce Decorum Est' * she tells us to read it once through then she starts like splitting up into sections and explaining each and every word and I used to find myself listening to her and not writing down notes but then I realised that I had to write notes because notes are important * but I used to find it very effective to just listen to her because I used to absorb everything she used to say * with regards to the seminars * I used to * the teacher chooses a poem and we go through it and she explains how we should

criticise it how we should find techniques and be able to realise why he has chosen to write in such an indirect manner for example rather than going straight to the point

INTERVIEWER: and during your tutorials/

STUDENT: tutorials the teacher the lecturer * he helps us to like be able to criticise our own work on the criticism of the poetry * and he tells us that we should always read our work before we hand it in because reading it once through or twice through is not enough and it's true because sometimes I find myself reading the same paragraph and always erasing it * yesterday I was trying to write a crit essay and I was really angry at this teacher of last year because I find myself looking at the computer and not being able to express myself

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy what you usually do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: yes I find it very interesting because as I told you each teacher conducts the lecture in a different way in his own style so I enjoy them * if I had to have each seminar each tutorial and lecture by the same teacher I think it would become very boring because I would always listen to the same manner the same style

INTERVIEWER: is there anything else that you would you like to do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: I think that poetry crit and prose crit the seminars shouldn't be just once a week * I think that it's not enough * there's such a wide variety of texts that one can criticise that it's not enough * it's not just for the exam that it's not enough but poetry there's so much to comprehend that I think on my own unless I was taught how to comprehend them I wouldn't have been able to do them on my own * if someone teaches me how to look further how to look deeper it will be more helpful for us students

INTERVIEWER: what are you gaining out of your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: I think what I'm gaining is beautiful because it's far more * it's not for the exam * it's something which goes beyond the exam * something which helps me in my own life * during crit the teacher sometimes stops and tells us what I'm saying now is not just for exam purposes it will last you for a lifetime

INTERVIEWER: have your poetry lessons at Junior College encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure/

STUDENT: no not exactly * because if I had to choose to read a poem or a novel I think I'd prefer the novel

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because the novel is more * it's a story * for example if the book speaks of love it tells a story of someone in love * the novel gives me time to understand it more * it explains the theme more it explains certain issues * poems are done in a more concise manner you know * but at the same time you can't really compare them because the poetry in itself is beautiful because the poet manages to do it in such a concise manner and it gets to you until it makes you understand while the novel makes you understand throughout the whole story * but a poet can recite a whole story in a small poem

INTERVIEWER: do your teachers read poetry/

STUDENT: yes definitely * I think that if a lecturer does not read poetry I don't think that he would be a very good lecturer

INTERVIEWER: how do you know however/ how do you know that they read poetry/

STUDENT: because we students can realise that from the way a teacher talks * for example I admire each lecturer in the different way he talks * you can say that a teacher reads about certain things or not * for example I assume that [teacher's name] reads about spiritual stuff and about things that have to do with linguistics * I mean he gives me that impression when he speaks * insights about life itself * when I listen to [teacher's name] speaking she looks at a poem in a more * it could be because she teaches me for the exam * but she looks at it from a mathematical manner * I mean not mathematical * systematic manner * it could be that if go to the extracurricular poetry thing she organises it could be that I change my opinion completely * but I think that there is a big distinction between what she reads and what [teacher's name] reads

INTERVIEWER: do your teachers ever talk about what they read with you/ do they ever share what they're reading/

STUDENT: yes * perhaps not poetry but other stuff * and I find it very helpful because I can relate a lot to certain teachers and when they suggest a certain book I make sure to go find it

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing poetry * have you ever written any poetry/

STUDENT: yes * I think I write poetry once every two weeks * I feel that poetry is such a stress relief * I mean I feel that art is such a stress relief * I mean I do ballet every day and I try to envelop my thoughts in poetry * because I mean as an

individual I enjoy talking to people about my opinions and about different things but there are certain things that as an individual I don't like to talk about them even to my mother * no one * I like to keep them to myself * I believe that even if you're married or if you're in a relationship with someone there are certain things that are just yours and that you don't share them with anyone * that's when I write poetry

INTERVIEWER: do you write song lyrics as well/

STUDENT: I used to play the guitar and I used to write song lyrics but if I had to choose I'd rather write poetry * I think it's different from lyrics

INTERVIEWER: in what way/

STUDENT: in a way that I can't really explain * I think it is different * I don't know how but it is different

INTERVIEWER: could you compare it to something using a metaphor or a simile/

STUDENT: ** I think that lyrics are more * it's like they're easier to write in a way that you have the musicality to back you up * if you have a melody in your head you can write the lyrics * but from another perspective for example Eminem * his lyrics if I didn't know it's a song I would think it's poetry because he uses a rhyme scheme alternate rhyme and things like this * if I had to read his lyrics I wouldn't realise that they're not poetry because he writes in such a profound manner * I think what I'm trying to get to is that poetry might be more profound in a certain way * I don't know how to explain it properly

INTERVIEWER: would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

STUDENT: yes * I think that it would be really nice but in a way an examiner can't really assess you on that can he/ * you can criticise it because the examiner might feel that it's really not how a poem should be written * but he can't really assess you on what you're saying * he can't tell you that you have confused thoughts but I might have confused thoughts and have written them on paper

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about writing about poetry * what have your teachers told you to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: she tells us to look closely at technique and at how effects affect the poem * this is something that I've been listening to for quite some time * techniques and its effects and then examples * it's something that each teacher tells us to do and not to paraphrase what the poet is saying because that would fail us

INTERVIEWER: and how about when writing an essay on an unseen poem/ what do they tell you to do/

STUDENT: [teacher's name] tells us that before we start writing points we should spend at least five minutes reading and reading the poem and understand it and imagining that we have written the poem and that would help us see the emotion that the poet is trying to portray or the story that he's trying to tell you know * that could help us more to realise why he decided to choose that verb rather than the other to choose that technique instead of something else

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to read you a definition and I'm going to ask you a question about it * personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry/

STUDENT: no not exactly because * I don't think that * personally I think that if I can relate to a poem that's fine * I think it's better if I can relate to it because I can give a better insight but giving my opinion in an essay is not right * it's not the place in which I have to give my own opinion * it's where I need to analyse the opinion of someone else you know * if I were to give my opinion about the poem it would be something else * it wouldn't be criticism * my opinion can help me but I don't I should include it in an essay * perhaps in the conclusion

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: [silent reading of poem] I think this is what I used to feel during my secondary years at school * as an individual I like giving my opinion and saying what I feel about a poem * and I think that used to happen a lot during my secondary school years but during Form 5 because we had a really good teacher and she used to let us say our opinions and she used to tell us how we should channel our opinions and criticise it * but there was a time when the teacher used to tell us this means that the poet wants to say this and that * and I used to find myself during the exam listening to what the teacher had said and writing it down and I think that is the moment when poetry is ruined because a teacher can help you to get to an answer * she can help you to analyse it in a better manner * I'm still a student I'm still learning so I don't know how to do certain things * but in the end * last time [student's name]

and I were discussing that if we had to actually sit down and write an essay about it and then bring in what the teacher at school has told me that would be the best way how I could write a crit essay * what I think and what the teacher has taught me but I think that yes there are unfortunately many teachers who make poems look like a mathematical equation * like there's no other way * as if there are only two methods how to work it and that's how you have to do it * there's no other way

INTERVIEWER: and do you feel that students actually tie the poem to a chair and torture it/ is that what happens/

STUDENT: I think there are students who do that

INTERVIEWER: and why do they do that/

STUDENT: because they are * I think language is an art * for example I hate maths and science because it is something that is full of facts and you have to stick to them * you can't give your opinion about them * OK you can give your opinion because scientists are original they have to create but they have to always go back to the facts and certain mathematical structures * but it's such a pity to watch students who look at a poem and start to find alliteration metaphors * poetry is something so deep that you can always read it again and always find something different * always giving it a different meaning a different perspective

INTERVIEWER: I'm going to show you a video and I'd like you to tell me a bit more about that

STUDENT: [watches video] I understood the last part even better now because we are sometimes too fascinated with the idea of comprehending of understanding and I think that there are certain things in life that we can't understand and that we'll never be able to understand and that's the beauty of it after all * if we had to understand everything * if we had to know why a bird can fly why we can't * I think that that would be like the end of our lives * I think that's the beauty of life that we can't understand everything * that we have to like * not say yes * I think that's the beauty of it that we have to be able to understand that we can't understand and I think that's why poetry is so beautiful * why it makes people so happy

INTERVIEWER: you mentioned that you were able to understand the last part even better * why/

STUDENT: because when you listen to something * for example when I read a poem in my heart and when I read it out loud it makes such a difference * sometimes when I'm in an exam I just do like this [covers her mouth] and read it and I can hear myself

better * for example even when the teacher reads it I find myself just listening to it and being able to absorb it * I can't explain what's the difference but it makes a lot of difference

INTERVIEWER: so did the video help you to understand the poem better/

STUDENT: I think it wasn't the video exactly but the voice * the voice

INTERVIEWER: thank you for participating in this interview

Appendix 32 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Student F

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * which lessons do you like most out of your entire English course/

STUDENT: ** I like Shakespeare a lot * I always have as in from secondary school * *Handmaid's Tale* * and I like crit as well

INTERVIEWER: you mentioned *Othello* * why do you like *Othello*/

STUDENT: I think I just love Shakespeare in general as in the language * even when I'm studying it I like studying it out loud * I like translating his language into words I can understand myself

INTERVIEWER: you mentioned crit as well * why do you like crit/

STUDENT: I think it gives me sort of * it gives me like observing things like not just taking it poetry as a means of expression * I can like break it down and see why he used this metaphor

INTERVIEWER: and do you prefer crit focusing on prose or crit focusing on poetry/

STUDENT: I think poetry

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: ** I love music I always have and sort of I think poetry is a bit more you know * it's sort of like lyrics in a way * I think lyrics are a form of poetry so that's why I like it most

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

STUDENT: * I think I prefer * science fiction I'm not really into as in I like it sort of * but I think I prefer reading novels sort like *Handmaid's Tale* * things that I can relate to more

INTERVIEWER: any authors in mind that you particularly enjoy reading/

STUDENT: ** I used to read a lot of Nicholas Sparks until I started to realise that they're all the same [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: and who's your favourite author right now/

STUDENT: I like David Nicholls a lot * he wrote *One Day* * and I read another one by him as well

INTERVIEWER: what do you understand by the term poetry/

STUDENT: poetry/ * a poem is obviously a means of expression and * I think apart from being a means of expression is not just you know writing how you feel * sort of giving a chance giving readers the opportunity to you know * I don't know how to explain it * like they can interpret it how they want to

INTERVIEWER: if you had to compare it to something using a simile or a metaphor what would you compare it to/

STUDENT: I don't know * I think music * because you can sort of understand how someone's feeling and relate to it

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading or listening to poetry/

STUDENT: reading

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because I think it's something * on a personal level * sort of something * I like reading it to myself * I don't want to have someone else reading it * I don't know * I think it's more hands on when you're reading it

INTERVIEWER: and do you read a lot of poetry/

STUDENT: ** I don't think I do

INTERVIEWER: and how about music lyrics/

STUDENT: yes and I've tried writing my own as well * I don't go to lessons but I think I enjoy the musicality * it depends on what kind of lyrics though * there are lyrics which are more poetic than others

INTERVIEWER: such as/ could you give me examples/

STUDENT: I don't know * but I'm not going to compare the lyrics on the radio now * OK there is like Coldplay and U2 and their lyrics are very you know poetic and they're not just I love you you love me and things like that

INTERVIEWER: so when you write lyrics do you have a particular musician in mind whose work you use as a model/

STUDENT: this might be silly but for a seventeen year old girl * I love Taylor Swift * John Mayer I really love his music * his lyrics are poetic * I'm more on the soft you know guitar and acoustics

INTERVIEWER: and do you consider those lyrics poetry/

STUDENT: yes

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: I think because apart from relating to them * I don't want to sound naïve but I really think that the good musician puts a lot of thought and thought into writing their lyrics

INTERVIEWER: do you read poetry for personal pleasure or for study purposes/

STUDENT: for study purposes * to be honest I think I think that if it wasn't for school I wouldn't read too much poetry

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: I don't know * I really don't know ** because I think I've always thought of it as being academic sort of it's work * that's why maybe if I give myself a chance I'd maybe like love it more because since I love music and lyrics are poetry for me and as music is something enjoyable * then maybe if I look at published poetry from another perspective and not as something that has to do with school maybe I would read more

INTERVIEWER: now * do you like all or any of Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: I like most of them * I like the ones that have to do with the individual soldier mostly

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because I think they reveal like the horrific element of war more than those poems who focus on large of soldiers in general

INTERVIEWER: and how about the poems that you read during your literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: when I can't gauge the whatever it is it frustrates me * maybe because I'd feel blocked I don't know what it is * but if it's a poem I really enjoy then I go along with it * this year we're doing more prose than poetry but no I do enjoy them

INTERVIEWER: how about the poems that you do for your tutorials/

STUDENT: there are some which I can't enjoy * if they're difficult especially but I think it probably depends on my mood * I don't know * if I'm not focusing then I won't really like it * I think when I break it down and I start analysing it then it's not that bad you know

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: the teacher the teacher

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about that/

STUDENT: ** I think he sort of knows more than me sort of so he knows what he's doing * sort of he has the method of how we're meant to be working at the moment so he knows what he's doing so we have to follow his instructions

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that students might be encouraged to bring poems and lyrics to class and discuss/

STUDENT: I think it's a good idea because sort of you're giving the students an opportunity to actually read it themselves and you're giving them sort of I don't know * it shows that they're appreciating it * by actually bringing it in class it actually shows that it means something to them and they're appreciating it not just like it's work but it means something to them * personally

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about studying poetry * why do we study poetry/

STUDENT: *** I think * apart from learning the techniques * for those who love English and literature it's essential * I don't think it should be seen as something that you know is not fun * it's something that they enjoy

INTERVIEWER: should we continue studying poetry in this day and age/

STUDENT: yes

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: I think poetry as in * it's like music * it's always going to be music * it's never going to change * do you know what I mean/ you can't * it's not that poetry is going to stay the same forever * it's something that you know

INTERVIEWER: but why should we continue studying it/

STUDENT: ** we learn how it allows people to express themselves

INTERVIEWER: there are some who say we shouldn't continue studying poetry/ what do you think about that/

STUDENT: no I don't agree * because first of all it's an art and you don't see people abolishing paintings and things like that * OK the people who enjoy poetry might be in a minority when compared to people who enjoy art and music and things like that but it's still an art at the end of the day

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy studying poetry/

STUDENT: yes I do * I enjoy figuring out what the poet is trying to say what he's trying to express * no I enjoy it a lot

INTERVIEWER: if I say poetry lesson to you what comes to mind/

STUDENT: observing analysing criticising poetry I think ** no I enjoy it

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you like about your poetry lessons/ let's start with your lectures on Wilfred Owen

STUDENT: they were pretty much the same each time * we used to read the poem and then write notes so it was never sort of interesting * it never changed * I think I prefer studying it at home then actually doing it in class

INTERVIEWER: and how about your literary criticism seminars on poetry/

STUDENT: no no I enjoy them and I like speaking up in class * my own ideas

INTERVIEWER: and how about your tutorials on poetry/

STUDENT: the fact that it's homework is obviously not that fun [laughs] * but no I do like them * I prefer having to write an essay on literary criticism than *Heart of the Matter* for example

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you don't like about your poetry lessons/ starting with your lectures on Wilfred Owen

STUDENT: I think from my experience I would prefer those teachers who ask me to give my own opinion * because it was sort of let's just do the poem write about it and the syllabus is finished

INTERVIEWER: and how about your seminars on poetry/ is there anything you don't like about them/

STUDENT: I think this year I'm enjoying them more because we have an opportunity to speak up more

INTERVIEWER: and your poetry tutorials/

STUDENT: no I think it's good * if I have to be honest they're much better this year than last year because last year we never used to actually discuss the work * we just used to read out the essay and he'd correct it there and then * but this year it's better because we first discuss the poem and then discuss the essay

INTERVIEWER: and what do you usually do during your poetry lessons/ starting with your lectures

STUDENT: Wilfred Owen/ we'd read the poem then the teacher would write notes on the board and we copy them and then we go through the poem line by line and he'd tell us what's happening basically

INTERVIEWER: and in your seminars on poetry/

STUDENT: we'd speak about for example characterisation and then the teacher would find a text from the book where there's actually something we can analyse in terms of characterisation and give our own ideas of how it's being developed

INTERVIEWER: and in your tutorials/

STUDENT: last year we used to just read out our work out loud and by time everyone would have read out their essay the lesson's over so we didn't use to do much * but this year we discuss the poem we write the essay hand it in and discuss our ideas

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy what you usually do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: yes I do * I wish we could sort of * I don't know how to explain it * like give it a bit more * go deeper into it * because poetry isn't * I don't want it to be just for my MATSEC syllabus * I want it to be a way of like * give it a bit of more * emotion * I don't know how to explain it I don't know why * like depth

INTERVIEWER: is there anything else that you would you like to do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: I think that's the main thing that I'd like * give it more depth more feeling

INTERVIEWER: what are you gaining out of your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: I have a big difficulty when it comes to expressing myself * like even when writing my essays I keep beating around the bush * so I think that's what my lessons are helping me to do * express myself in a more * I don't know

INTERVIEWER: but doesn't this happen during your Atwood and Greene lessons for example/

STUDENT: I think so to a certain extent but I think poetry more because poetry is actually * it's OK a text but it's more profound * so actually analysing it and seeing how the poet is expressing himself helps me with my own expression

INTERVIEWER: let me rephrase the question * if you hadn't studied poetry over these two years what would you have missed/

STUDENT: ** there definitely is something * I'm just trying to figure out how to put it ** it's probably made me enjoy poetry more * I think it's made me realise that lyrics are poetic too * it's writing how you feel but in a structured and meaningful way

INTERVIEWER: have your poetry lessons at Junior College encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure/

STUDENT: I think so * due to my lessons I have to read more poetry because I'm forced to

INTERVIEWER: but do you also read more poetry for pleasure/ at home for example

STUDENT: not in an extreme way but I have taken more of an interest in it

INTERVIEWER: and how about reading other stuff like lyrics for example/

STUDENT: that's always been there though * there was an effect as in I've learnt to appreciate the language more but I've always been interested in lyrics

INTERVIEWER: do your teachers read poetry/

STUDENT: I think so

INTERVIEWER: how do you know/

STUDENT: my literary crit teacher definitely does as in he's written a book as well * he told us he reads * but novels more than poetry

INTERVIEWER: and your other poetry teachers/

STUDENT: I think it's sort of necessary to read poetry if you're an English teacher

INTERVIEWER: but have they told you about it/

STUDENT: no not really/

INTERVIEWER: how do you feel about that/

STUDENT: I never actually thought about it but I think it would be nice to actually know what my teachers are interested in and sort of * for example to tell us I'm reading this at the moment I'm really enjoying it and I recommend that you read it

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing poetry * have you ever written any poetry/

STUDENT: lyrics more than poetry

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: it's easier for me * I don't want to sound clichéd but if I'm going through something or

INTERVIEWER: going through something meaning what/

STUDENT: I don't know * it could be the simplest thing like a boy ** I just sit down and I write down what I'm feeling on paper but I never * that's the thing that poetry has taught me * when I actually write it I think of a way in which I could sound more beautiful * more metaphoric original * or artistic you know

INTERVIEWER: do you write a lot of lyrics/

STUDENT: I used to write more than I do now because at the moment it's like everything is you know piling up for the exams and things like that * but yes I like doing it

INTERVIEWER: and do you actually sing those lyrics/

STUDENT: I'm not exactly confident in my own thing so I always actually sing other people's lyrics

INTERVIEWER: do you make a difference between the lyrics that you write and poetry/ do you consider them to be poetry or are they somehow different in your mind/

STUDENT: ** I think the lyrics I write to consider them poetry would be something you know * I tell myself how can this be poetry

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: ** I don't know * I wish I could consider them to be as good as poetry * I never actually write something and say wow this is a poem * I'm not very confident in my own thing * I don't know why * if someone were to tell me it's really good it would be amazing

INTERVIEWER: have you shared your writing with others/

STUDENT: not really no

INTERVIEWER: would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

STUDENT: yes * I think even for students who aren't really into poetry it makes them appreciate how tough * well not tough * but the actual thought process that it takes to write a poem * for example some students can't actually tell what a metaphor is but when you actually write a poem you can really appreciate what it takes to sort of come up with that idea * it's more hands on I think

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing about poetry * what have your teachers told you to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: I think there are two ways of actually doing it * I prefer doing it poem by poem * there's one way where you can actually add as many titles or poems as you want to a paragraph describing one aspect I think * and then there's the actual going paragraph by paragraph one poem each * I prefer that way I think

INTERVIEWER: and how about an essay on an unseen poem/

STUDENT: first to read it two or three times * then to identify the metaphors similes anything like that * then to take a look at the structure and how the structure and the imagery are related to the theme and in the essay you have to write * in the introduction you have to have a thesis statement and then you go paragraph by paragraph * if you mentioned imagery structure and diction in your introduction then

you will have a paragraph on each one * in the conclusion you bring it all together again

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to read you a definition and I'm going to ask you a question about it * personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry/

STUDENT: I'm not afraid but I'm a bit cautious * for example when I'm doing something for my A-levels then I'm afraid that the examiner won't agree or something like that and obviously I want to do well * but if it was just for pleasure sort of writing about a poem I like then yes I would * not for my exams thought because if I say in my opinion this is what's happening and the examiner doesn't agree then I could fail

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: [silent reading of poem] I think Billy Collins is seeing it from the perspective of a teacher like he wants students to really appreciate the poem not abuse of it * they're just trying to get the definition out of it because you know they have to but he wants them to actually go deep inside the poem

INTERVIEWER: and how do the students react to this/

STUDENT: but all they want to do is tie the poem to a chair with rope and torture a confession out of it * they're not really bothered I think

INTERVIEWER: what are the students trying to do/

STUDENT: they're trying too hard to get out a definition * like interrogating it * they want to extract meaning out of it but they're not doing it the right way * the teacher wants them to feel the poem and not torture it

INTERVIEWER: does the poem describe your own experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: I think every teacher wants their students to do that * I think it's the students' attitude which sort of ruins it * there are some students who want to get it over and done with * they just want to you know get going * and I admit I sometimes do it myself because I just want to write an essay about it * I think that looking at it from a more creative perspective is a better experience

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to show you a video and I'd like you to tell me a bit more about that

STUDENT: [watches video] I think the students end up in a way like choking the poem trying to get everything out of it even if there isn't much * that's what I understood * and he wants them to use everything like our senses * to sort of not like I said abuse it

INTERVIEWER: and is this what goes on in your actual poetry lessons/

STUDENT: sometimes when you can't really understand the poem sort of you start throwing words everywhere * this is what he means this is what he's trying to say and I end up not getting anything out of it

INTERVIEWER: and why do people do that/

STUDENT: I think either because they'd want to know whether they're right or not * as in where I stand * I'd want to know like whether my train of thought is going in the right direction * I think students panic because in the exam you only have one hour to write an essay about a poem * I don't know

INTERVIEWER: thanks a lot for participating in this interview

Appendix 33 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Student G

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * which lessons do you like most out of your entire English course/

STUDENT: I like the *Handmaid's Tale* lesson because I like the story and I like crit too

INTERVIEWER: which component in particular/ poetry or prose/

STUDENT: poetry but when the poem is good * when I like it

INTERVIEWER: what do you mean/

STUDENT: because certain poems I don't like * I don't relate to them so when I like the poem I like its meaning behind it or how we interpret it

INTERVIEWER: which kind of poems do you like/

STUDENT: ** either there's a mystery in it or * there's a reflective meaning behind it

INTERVIEWER: and the ones that you don't like/

STUDENT: if they're depressive or monotonous * it's important for me to relate to poems * even when I write an essay it needs to be a poem that I can relate to

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

STUDENT: anything about love or stuff like that * I don't like science fiction

INTERVIEWER: any favourite authors/

STUDENT: I don't think so no * as long as it's a good novel * I used to have one but I've forgotten about her and it was long time ago * because there was a series of books and I read them all

INTERVIEWER: is there an author that you're reading right now/

STUDENT: no not at the moment

INTERVIEWER: what do you understand by the term poetry/

STUDENT: a way of putting your thoughts * in a way that * not in a story * it has to be short sometimes there's metaphors rhyme

INTERVIEWER: and would you consider song lyrics to be poetry/

STUDENT: yes * because there are usually metaphors in them * it's a short * they have rhyme in them sometimes * the sentences are short * it's not a story

INTERVIEWER: who are your favourite musicians or bands when it comes to lyrics/

STUDENT: I like Eminem because when he raps he raps out of his own personal experience and then I like Christina Perri because she writes from the heart I feel

INTERVIEWER: and do you usually read the lyrics/

STUDENT: yes online * I always do that

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading or listening to poetry/

STUDENT: not that much

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: I don't know * it just isn't in me * for me I'd rather read a magazine or a book but that's it * I read lyrics but I don't read poetry no * but when I'm searching for something to write in a card as a gift for someone I do search for poetry

INTERVIEWER: and how about listening to poetry/

STUDENT: no not really

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: I don't know * I never had either chance or I've never thought about it ** I like how they read poetry but you might read it one way and someone else might read it another way * it's nice to hear it but I don't really listen to poetry

INTERVIEWER: do you read poetry for personal pleasure or for study purposes/

STUDENT: mostly for study purposes then as I said before when I have something to write in a card or something then I look for a poem online

INTERVIEWER: do you ever look for poems in a book/

STUDENT: I don't have books * poetry books * I have one on friendship so I do look for something in it if I'm writing a card for a friend but mostly online yes

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about choice of poems * do you like all or any of Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: I like most of them * they are a bit depressive but I like how he uses imagery * like it makes you imagine that you're there in war * I like how he writes

INTERVIEWER: which poems do you like in particular/

STUDENT: I like 'Dulce Decorum Est' * I like how there is the message behind it how it's ironic * like he's saying you are trying to get people to go to war but when you're actually in it it's not that great * and I like that

INTERVIEWER: are there any poems you don't like/

STUDENT: there's 'Mental Cases' I don't like

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: I don't know * it's depressive a lot

INTERVIEWER: how about the poems that you read for your literary criticism poetry seminars/

STUDENT: I like most of them * I like them yes * there was one about a fight between a couple * he was always drunk and she was tired and she had no idea what to do because she had no money and she had to take care of the kids * and I like it because it's a real life scene * it happens all the time

INTERVIEWER: why do you like the poems that you read during your seminars/

STUDENT: because as I've said most of them are about real life situations * even how the teacher explains it to you it makes you even more interested in the poem * you can relate to it yes

INTERVIEWER: how about the poems that you're assigned for your tutorials/

STUDENT: some of them I don't understand them but during my tutorial the teacher explains it and then I like them because * I'm being * they explain it to me so I know what it means * I would have a different idea about it and when they explain it to me like it's a different thing * I don't know how to put it

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: the teacher no/

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about that/

STUDENT: we should choose ourselves as well like they should choose for us and we should choose ourselves as well

INTERVIEWER: and would you choose lyrics as well to discuss with your classmates/

STUDENT: lyrics I like them I really like them

INTERVIEWER: so what do you think of the idea that students might be given the opportunity of bringing song lyrics and poems to class/

STUDENT: I really like it * I would be more interested personally

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: * because songs everyone can relate to them * like it's music * you can sing it * even it's more popular nowadays with the kids so yes I'd love to discuss like lyrics and things like that

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about studying poetry * why do we study poetry/

STUDENT: because of the exams no/ * we have to study it because in the exam we have the poetry sections and so we have to know that

INTERVIEWER: some people say that we should no longer study poetry * what do you think about this/

STUDENT: ** I think we should yes * I don't enjoy reading it personally but I think we should study it because it's part of the English like ** how do you say/ * I don't know * when I read someone's poem I really like it because it describes things in a very like descriptive and in a way that you'd never do it yourself like it's not something you do like constantly * when I talk to you I don't tell you in metaphors or speak to you in imagery so I like it yes * poetry * uses language in a different way

INTERVIEWER: so should we continue studying poetry in this day and age/

STUDENT: yes! why not/ I don't see why not

INTERVIEWER: but if you had to make an argument for which we should continue studying it what would you say/

STUDENT: that's a trick question [laughs] * because if you should appreciate the poems that have been written for centuries * they can relate to you * sometimes I find poems that are really true about my personal experience * that's why

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy studying poetry/

STUDENT: so and so

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: so and so * sometimes I get bored because I don't like the poem but when I like it then yes * if I understand it then I enjoy studying it

INTERVIEWER: if I say poetry lesson to you what comes to mind/

STUDENT: reading the poem first then like taking it bit by bit pointing out the terms * then describing it and explaining it in your own words and what you think the poet is trying to say in the poem

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you like about your poetry lessons/ let's start with your lectures moving on to the seminars and then finally your tutorials

STUDENT: I like them because it's really interesting how you read a poem and you interpret it in one way and when you hear it from someone else and they've interpreted it in another way * not everyone interprets it in one way * when you hear other people * what they think about it it's like I wouldn't have known that you could interpret that way

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you like about the lectures on Wilfred Owen/

STUDENT: yes because * first we read the poem and then * he talks about his personal experience in war and I would never have known about that because I've never actually been to war [laughs] so reading Wilfred Owen's poems have made me imagine and sympathise with those soldiers and their problems

INTERVIEWER: and how about your literary criticism seminars on poetry/

STUDENT: when my teacher explains it I like it * I don't know how to say it but in the seminar the teacher explains the poem and * then we can contrast our ideas with hers

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you like about your tutorials on poetry/

STUDENT: sometimes I'm * not embarrassed but it's like I don't know whether it's good so I don't know if it's wrong so sometimes I don't want to read my essay first * I feel a bit shy doing it

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you don't like about your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: I would like to hear poetry because if you hear it in another voice like * if you hear Wilfred Owen's poems * I think I've heard a poem once on tape * the person reading it has like * I don't know how to say it * a way of communicating * it's like he's telling a story even though it's a poem it's like he's telling a story * I'd like that but we don't really do this in our lessons * the teacher reads it but if we had to listen to CDs it would be better I think

INTERVIEWER: and how about your seminars/

STUDENT: I don't think there's anything I'd like to change no

INTERVIEWER: and your tutorials/

STUDENT: maybe not being asked to read our essays * I don't like that

INTERVIEWER: what do you usually do during your poetry lessons/ starting with your Wilfred Owen lectures

STUDENT: what happens like/ * we read the poem then the teacher not explains it because he doesn't explain it very well but he starts writing notes on the whiteboard and then he just reads it aloud * it's just copying * it's like * I think it could be improved because he doesn't really explain the poem he just reads it and gives us notes * we don't really participate

INTERVIEWER: and how about your poetry seminars/

STUDENT: first she introduces the poem and reads it and then breaks it down and then she asks us what we think about the poem * because it's important that she asks us what we think about it like not only what she thinks * you can interpret it in one

way and I can interpret it differently * so she first tells us what she thinks and then she lets us say what we think

INTERVIEWER: and what usually happens during a tutorial/

STUDENT: something similar as well because first she reads the poem and then we either read our essays about it or she explains it we write notes and then we read the essay

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy what you usually do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: yes usually * it depends also on the teacher because if you don't like your teacher * not if you don't like your teacher but if the teacher doesn't explain the poem good or she doesn't communicate with the students then it's not good

INTERVIEWER: is there anything else that you would you like to do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: as I said listening to recordings * I would also like to be given better explanations rather than just copying notes * I don't know if there are any videos but we could watch videos of war so you can relate to the poems and the background * and the most important thing I think is participation * the teacher asking for our participation

INTERVIEWER: what are you gaining out of your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: ** you know how to like express yourself in different ways * like when I read a poem I'm inspired to sometimes write my own but I'm not good at it so I don't do that really * because you have to have it in you as well * but it's nice to see that you can express yourself by means of metaphors and so on * I don't usually write poems but I've tried writing song lyrics even though I don't know how to sing * I'm inspired but I don't succeed most of the time * I'm inspired yes

INTERVIEWER: have your poetry lessons at Junior College encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure/

STUDENT: so and so because I don't usually go for poetry * I go for books * novels

INTERVIEWER: do your teachers read poetry/

STUDENT: ** I don't know

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: I think my crit teacher she reads poetry because she told us herself that she really enjoys crit and she likes poems and it shows even in class that when she explains it it shows she's doing it because she enjoys it * but the other teachers I don't know * they never mentioned it

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that your poetry teachers should share what they're reading with you/

STUDENT: I think yes because students like me who don't read poems * I don't know what's good and what's not so if they tell us like you can relate to that poem because it's really nice and about your life I might even go and find it and read it

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing poetry and song lyrics * you've mentioned that sometimes you write lyrics * why do you write lyrics/

STUDENT: I don't know * I like how you can write how you feel but in a limited way and with different meanings and metaphors and similes and stuff like that

INTERVIEWER: have you ever shown your song lyrics to your friends/

STUDENT: no!

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: I don't know I'm embarrassed to do that

INTERVIEWER: have you ever written any poetry/

STUDENT: no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: I don't know * I usually go search for them online * I tried once but not like a whole poem no

INTERVIEWER: would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

STUDENT: yes * it would be interesting I think * last year we did something like that but it was not writing our own but filling in the blanks and coming up with our own words * it was really interesting because everyone had a different word and it was really fun to do

INTERVIEWER: so what do you think of the idea of writing poetry in class/

STUDENT: I'd like it * we'd need to have help because we don't do any such writing on our own but yes I'd like it

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing about poetry * what have your teachers told you to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: first the introduction about theme and background * then like breaking it down stanza by stanza and pointing out the most important facts about the poem * like try to see what's going on in the story of the poem * then at the end you say your opinion * like what you think about the poem and how you interpreted it and if you enjoyed it * in the conclusion that is

INTERVIEWER: and how about an essay on an unseen poem/

STUDENT: some things are the same but first you have to write notes * you can't just start writing the essay * you might be mistaken about what you're writing * so first you have to read it very carefully * three times maybe * then identifying facts and then putting them into an essay * normally I start with the introduction on theme and then I start stanza by stanza and I explain what I think is going on and I explain whether there are any like images similes alliteration and stuff like that and then in the conclusion I put my own opinion into it and how I enjoyed it or not and why

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to read you a definition and then I'm going to ask you a question about it * personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry/

STUDENT: ** yes in the conclusion

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because everyone interprets it in their own * and I might like it but someone else might not like it so yes I think it's important to say your own opinion but in the conclusion

INTERVIEWER: what do your teachers tell you to do when it comes to personal response/

STUDENT: they tell us not to say that it's not good or the poem was not good or I think the poem means this or that * because it's an interpretation so you can't be personal * but in the conclusion yes

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: [silent reading of poem] I really like it

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because it's telling you * I think it's telling you you should take a poem really slowly and appreciate it and not just stating the facts and * to find out what it really means * you can't say it means this because you don't know for sure

INTERVIEWER: what is the teacher in the poem encouraging the students to do/

STUDENT: to take the poem really slowly and enjoying it and not just reading it and then just ** saying it's that or it means this * saying that one view of it is the right one

INTERVIEWER: does the poem describe your own experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: yes in a way * we go through it bit by bit and try to understand * however the teacher does ask us how we've understood it after she explains it to us

INTERVIEWER: do any students tie the poem to a chair and torture a confession out of it/

STUDENT: most of them yes

INTERVIEWER: why do they do that/

STUDENT: ** because they really want to know what the poem is about right away and they have to write about it so they write about it in one view * they don't look at it differently * they probably worry about what they'll do in the exam or something

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to show you a video and I'd like you to tell me a bit more about that

STUDENT: [watches video] I really like it!

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: it's a good interpretation of the poem * it makes you even more relate to it * makes you even more understand what the poet is trying to say

INTERVIEWER: so is it describing your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: ** at the end when he says that if you tie the poem to a chair to really dig into it it's like the poem is gone * you no longer have a poem because you didn't appreciate it very well ** I'm a bit lost for words * but after watching the video I can more understand what this poem is trying to say * especially the ending and how we sometimes try to force meaning out of a poem

INTERVIEWER: thanks a lot for participating in this interview

Appendix 34 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Student H

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * which lessons do you like most out of your entire English course/

STUDENT: the *Handmaid's Tale* I think ** *Othello* not that much * I had *Macbeth* for O-level but *Othello* is a bit * kind of * it doesn't make sense * because it's like the characters * it's all about Iago * linguistics is very interesting but some aspects of it we didn't go into detail

INTERVIEWER: how about crit/ do you like crit/

STUDENT: not exactly no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: it's a bit difficult and it's not really explained well * for example last year things like metre and so on we didn't do them in detail * so it's a bit confusing * I find it difficult

INTERVIEWER: and how about Wilfred Owen/

STUDENT: it's a bit depressing obviously * something more interesting would be better but we can associate with it I guess * kind of we went to the Somme on an English trip * it gave us a better understanding of what they went through

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

STUDENT: fiction * at the moment I'm reading something of Jodi Picoult * I read *Nineteen Eighty-Four* of George Orwell * a mix of things actually

INTERVIEWER: do you have any favourite authors/

STUDENT: Dan Brown * Jodi Picoult I started reading recently * Jane Austen * *Pride and Prejudice Emma Sense and Sensibility* ** *The Book Thief*

INTERVIEWER: and how about poetry/ are there any poets whose work you read for pleasure/

STUDENT: sometimes I write it but I don't really read it

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: ** I don't know * I don't know kind of where to look for good poetry * we had that Margaret Atwood poem * that was interesting to read kind of

INTERVIEWER: and how about song lyrics/

STUDENT: yes * I look up a lot * I prefer the ones that have a meaning * songs which have no meaning have nothing in them

INTERVIEWER: and which are your favourite musicians or bands when it comes lyrics/

STUDENT: U2 * Coldplay * my dad listens to Rush and Genesis and Pink Floyd * that kind of thing * they have lyrics with a lot of meanings * especially Pink Floyd's *The Wall* there's a lot about communism and all that in it so it's very interesting * Pink I sometimes like because even though her songs are kind of punk rock they've got a message to them so * I like lyrics which I can associate with

INTERVIEWER: what do you understand by the term poetry/

STUDENT: it's an expression of feelings * it's a * I don't know * it's a way how to express yourself through writing * through different forms and metaphors and similes * it's like a different way how to express yourself rather than just saying something straightforward you can say something in a different way and people can understand from many different perspectives * so it gives other people a different meaning to what they're feeling

INTERVIEWER: do you make a distinction between poetry and song lyrics/

STUDENT: yes * song lyrics are kind of more acoustic to listen to so at times they're not really meant to be understood kind of for their meaning * but in poetry * it has more of a deeper meaning than song lyrics

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading or listening to poetry/

STUDENT: *** reading I think because everyone interprets it in a different way and then through discussion it gets easier to understand

INTERVIEWER: how about listening to poetry/

STUDENT: with [teacher's name] we did last year * 'Dulce Decorum Est' I think he taped it for us * it was interesting because the reading of the poem made me realise that it's a different way of interpreting the poem * for example Gas! Gas! I never taught it was meant to be read that way so it was interesting

INTERVIEWER: is there a difference between reading and listening to a poem/

STUDENT: yes * listening to a poem I think gives it a different meaning because it's the way it sounds as well * different cacophonies * the vowels come out more

INTERVIEWER: do you read poetry for personal pleasure or for study purposes/

STUDENT: study purposes it think * for personal pleasure there was a book of different poets and I was going through it a bit * stuff we don't do at school * sometimes I write my own poetry * if I see a poem I'm going to read it but I don't really know where to look for

INTERVIEWER: do you have any poets in mind whose poems you enjoy reading/

STUDENT: Chaucer and Keats those I think are a bit too dragging * I like Shakespeare * at school we had done some sonnets * we had of John Betjeman * who else/ * stuff about nature and life these kind of things are very interesting other than war and death and depressing things * it gets to you * you remember it but still you know

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about choice of poems * do you like all or any of Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: I don't like the ones on religion * they don't get me at all * I don't know

INTERVIEWER: which poems do you like in particular/

STUDENT: well 'Dulce Decorum Est' * where he's standing up for his comrades and you can see he's passionate about it and you can really pity them * because you know he's been through it and he describes it how he's seen it * it comes out more you know * you experience it

INTERVIEWER: do you like all or any of the poems that you do for your literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: * not exactly * I don't really * we use the red book * sometimes we past papers from 1969

INTERVIEWER: why don't you like them/

STUDENT: I don't know * kind of even the format of the questions we're asked * in the past it was short questions and they kind of help the students more * now we write essays and I don't know what exactly I'm supposed to write * it's a poem you never saw before

INTERVIEWER: but how about the poems themselves/

STUDENT: they are interesting but you forget about them easily you know

INTERVIEWER: and how about the poems that you're assigned for your tutorials/

STUDENT: same thing * with some exceptions like 'Variations on the Word Love' * the rest it's easy to forget

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: I think the head of department

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about that/

STUDENT: if they're relevant to what we're doing at the moment I think they're a good choice * sometimes they're a bit hard to understand you know * I don't know how to elaborate on them sometimes * it's a bit confusing

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that students should be given the opportunity of bringing song lyrics and poems to class/

STUDENT: ** I think I'd agree with that because it involves people more * because some people just miss lessons and say I'm not coming because I don't feel like doing that * if you actually get them involved the more aware and interested they'd be * it sticks in their minds more I think

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about studying poetry * why do we study poetry/

STUDENT: ** I think poetry is a medium it's kind of * I don't know how to explain it * it's kind of you understand how people live life in different ways and different experiences * life war death * kind of poetry it sticks on * even when the poet dies you see how people thought and how people lived

INTERVIEWER: should we continue studying poetry in this day and age/

STUDENT: yes I think so

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because I think even though we think that we've advanced some things remain the same and it's good to go back to that and see that something's stable to look at and that in the end we're all the same but we look at things differently you know

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy studying poetry/

STUDENT: yes the one I like though * the others I forget

INTERVIEWER: if I say poetry lesson to you what comes to mind/

STUDENT: don't know * guess it's kind of reading it and figuring it out * but some of them I forget very easily as I've said

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you like about your poetry lessons/ let's start with your lectures

STUDENT: well Owen was not too bad but there were some gaps because we had to rush a bit at the end and some of us * I don't know * the ones about religion we all forget them because we rushed a bit too much through them * I think if they scrap those poems we'd have more time to focus on the really important ones * I think

we'd have much more to say and to elaborate on * because if you have a lot and only a little bit to say about each one I think it's not that good you know in the exam

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you like about your literary criticism seminars on poetry/

STUDENT: ** not really because the lessons are boring * all we do is just sit down and read poems * kind of it's not fun * a lot of people complain to me * all we do is sit down and read poems and then write essays for homework * it's not as if we're doing something that will teach us to like poetry better * the lessons are kind of monotonous * we copy from the board and look up words we don't know * and this year we're doing more prose than poetry

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about that/

STUDENT: I don't really agree with it because prose is kind of more straight forward to understand * for poetry there's much more to study * just the way of it is much more difficult than prose

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you like about your tutorials on poetry/

STUDENT: ** not really because in the tutorials all we do is read out the essays and she explains a bit but kind of after we've done it it's not really useful * you can't do anything about it * if we had an explanation before we did the essay rather than afterwards it would be better

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you don't like about your poetry lessons/ let's start with your lectures

STUDENT: ** it was I don't know * it was a bit boring kind of he explained it he explained the poem but kind of it was always the same thing * I don't know maybe if we had acted it out or something it would have been better you know

INTERVIEWER: and what didn't you like about your literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: *** that's a bit confusing * sometimes we do imagery sometimes death * it's a bit confusing because we have different elements and kind of to structure all of them in an essay is a bit confusing for us

INTERVIEWER: and how about your tutorials/ is there anything you don't like/

STUDENT: not really * kind of at the moment we have that poem 'Variations on the Word Love' * she explained it well but kind of after we did the essay so the explanation wasn't really there when we were writing it * I'd prefer having a discussion before the essay even though in the exam we won't have a discussion

before writing the essay * getting an explanation each time is kind of spoon feeding so

INTERVIEWER: what do you usually do during your poetry lessons/ starting with your Wilfred Owen lectures

STUDENT: we go to class sit down * he'd tell us to open the page of the book * we start reading the poem * after the poem we close the book and he'd start writing notes on the board * a summary of the whole poem kind of

INTERVIEWER: and how about your poetry crit lessons/

STUDENT: we use that red book *Language of Literature* * it's a bit confusing but because the teacher doesn't usually know where were last time and some of the things were harder than others * like metric and all those * like assonance iambic pentameter * I think we need more time on them * I think we're still confused about how to write an essay about an unseen poem * we don't really know what to write about

INTERVIEWER: what usually happens during a poetry tutorial/

STUDENT: ** I'm trying to remember * well we go through the poem stanza by stanza * we talk about the meaning of each stanza * we stress on the meaning obviously because it's the most important I think * but then the figures of speech they kind of intertwine with the meaning

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy what you usually do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: not really * last year kind of all we did it was a bit boring you know * kind of not all of us can relate to it * it's when I went to the Somme that I really appreciated what they went through * when I got involved * but just seeing like that in the book it's quite boring and depressing so

INTERVIEWER: is there anything else that you would you like to do during your poetry lessons/ let's start with your lectures

STUDENT: maybe reading it out

INTERVIEWER: who/

STUDENT: us because he usually reads it out or plays the tape * but I think if we got more involved we'd know what we're saying and we would be able to remember the poems better * because just by hearing them some of the people just don't listen and don't pay attention * I think we need a bit more involvement in class

INTERVIEWER: and your poetry seminars/

STUDENT: I think they should give us sample essays * that would be really helpful * maybe York notes Spark notes more material to work with kind of ** more explanation more of a guideline of how to go about the poem * because most of us panic when we see a poem you know * we don't know how to write about it * we should also try to do more poetry or switch it round to do prose in the first year and poetry in the second year because we'd have more on what to elaborate and poetry's more important I think since it's more difficult

INTERVIEWER: and how about the poetry tutorials/

STUDENT: ** she asks to read out our essay or just the introduction and checks that we've understood it and we thought by it and if we wrong in some of the things because since we interpret it in different ways we can't always get it right ** the teacher should give us an explanation before we write the essay * how to write the essay and how to look at the poem and to see what's important in it and what to take out of it * because some of us look at the poem and say OK what's important in this/ what do I need to highlight/ ** I guess we could split it up into different segments and say why this is more important than the other one * because some of us are a bit confused

INTERVIEWER: what are you gaining out of your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: *** I don't know kind of * for example last year during Wilfred Owen we just learnt a bit about the poem and that's it and a bit of understanding about the poet but nothing much

INTERVIEWER: and your crit seminars on poetry/

STUDENT: ** we're gaining an understanding of how to refer to poems and how to see them in a different light whereas before we just skimmed through it and say OK we're ready * we're not just looking at the easy stuff now

INTERVIEWER: and out of your tutorials on poetry/

STUDENT: a lot of help I think because most of us get confused about how to write an essay on poetry and in the tutorial she helps us kind of * if there are any problems or difficulties we can just ask since it's a small group

INTERVIEWER: if you hadn't studied poetry at Junior College what would you have missed/

STUDENT: nothing much I guess [laughs] * I don't think it helps us in the same way that the lectures on the novels help us because I'm still as confused about poetry now as when I came here

INTERVIEWER: have your poetry lessons at Junior College encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure/

STUDENT: ** yes and no * in general not really because most of us just feel fed up with the number of poems we have to study

INTERVIEWER: will you continue reading poetry in the future/

STUDENT: I think so * I don't think it's thanks to my lessons at Junior College * it's just because I like to read * so if I come across something I'll read it but I don't think I'll go out and buy a poetry book

INTERVIEWER: do your poetry teachers read poetry/

STUDENT: ** I don't know

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: they never told us I think

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that your poetry teachers should share what they're reading with you/

STUDENT: I think if they do that then it can help us appreciate and understand poetry more * even with song lyrics if they had to come in and tell us do you know this song it would be more interesting I think * for example that song 'Hotel California' has a different meaning than I thought it had because I read the lyrics * it's very interesting if they had to discuss such things with us

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing poetry * have you ever written any poetry/

STUDENT: yes

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: ** because I just felt like it * sometimes I just start writing a poem you know and then I just kind of keep it there

INTERVIEWER: have you been doing this for long/

STUDENT: no * last year I wrote a few poems in a copybook and I showed them to [teacher's name] * I don't know where that went * because I just kind of had nothing to do

INTERVIEWER: have you ever written any song lyrics/

STUDENT: no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: I'm trying to learn the guitar at the moment but I don't know * I think it's a bit harder than just writing poetry because with songs they kind of need to

sound better you know * poetry kind of if you tell the reader what you're feeling in any sort of way it will make sense to the reader but songs have to have music

INTERVIEWER: would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

STUDENT: as part of the syllabus * I don't know * I think it would be interesting because we'd learn how the authors made up their poems and appreciate more metre and style and structure and all that but perhaps not in the exam * in class OK

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing about poetry * what have your teachers told you to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: first you need to give a background about Wilfred Owen and the setting of the poems * why he was writing it * then it depends on the question what we have to write about * for example if it's about the plight of the soldier we start writing about 'Dulce Decorum Est' and how they suffered * metaphors and similes he used * it has to be coherent * you compare poems you know

INTERVIEWER: and what have your teachers asked you to do when writing an essay on an unseen poem/

STUDENT: first you read it twice that's what they keep telling us * then go through it line by line * we have to be more objective than subjective about it * we can't make assumptions

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to read you a definition and then I'm going to ask you a question about it * personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry/

STUDENT: yes! * even if we're trying to be objective our opinion comes through anyway because we've got our own opinions and feelings about it * if the title is kind of subjective * do you agree or disagree/ then you have to bring out your opinion more * but for the exam you have to more objective because you could be wrong or you say something which is not correct in the sense of the poem

INTERVIEWER: what do your teachers tell you to do when it comes to personal response/

STUDENT: they tell us to be careful how we express our opinion * if we read a poem and we think it means something we have to be careful to say things like one

might say * we have to put it like that * because if we state that it's a fact then we might be wrong

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: [silent reading of poem] yes because what we basically do is read a poem and according to the syllabus we say what it means its structure and that kind of thing * I think a poem has a deeper meaning to it * with all the audial and visual imagery and the tactile * I think poetry has a deeper meaning to its face value * we need to know more than what the syllabus says than for educational purposes I think * during the lessons we focus more on improving our grades than enjoying a poem it's meaning and all that I think

INTERVIEWER: do you feel that you and your fellow students tie the poem to a chair and torture it/

STUDENT: yes!

INTERVIEWER: and why do you do that/

STUDENT: ** because kind of through education we're forced to * I think poetry has more of a spiritual meaning * it's like we put it on paper execute and write an essay about it at the end * I don't think it's meant to be like that

INTERVIEWER: do your teachers adopt the attitude of the speaker in the poem/

STUDENT: some of them yes some of them no * those teachers who are passionate about poetry they do get it through a bit but then they still focus obviously on the educational way in which we're meant to do it * some of the teachers care for the poem and you can feel that they are passionate about it

INTERVIEWER: do you think the teacher should give you the meaning/

STUDENT: I think at first we should read it and interpret it and then discuss it * the teacher should tell us how we should put our thoughts and feelings into words * I think it would be easier in that sense

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to show you a video and I'd like you to tell me a bit more about that

STUDENT: [watches video] I think if watch something like this we'd understand the poems more * like a video or something

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because we can actually see it you know * something which is on paper OK we can see it but I think through a film or a video we'll remember it more you know * because some of us we remember things visually * some of us through sounds you know * so I think if we had to use our senses I think it would be easier * for example for me I understand what it means but some people might not really understand it * so just to show them through a video or something they'd be able to understand it more I think

INTERVIEWER: do you still feel that the poem is describing your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: ** yes kind of we do torture a confession out of it * we just look for what we want out of it * the meaning the part we want to see * kind of a poem is a whole poem * kind of we take bits out of it and try to kind of execute it just the way we want to portray it kind of

INTERVIEWER: and why do you do that/

STUDENT: because it's in the syllabus you know

INTERVIEWER: thanks so much for participating in this interview

Appendix 35 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Student I

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * which lessons do you like most out of your entire English course/

STUDENT: Shakespeare and *Handmaid's Tale* * and the tutorial lessons

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: Shakespeare because I've always enjoyed Shakespeare * I've enjoyed his imagery his language * even though it's a bit difficult to understand I always have a good grasp of it * *Handmaid's Tale* I enjoy it because it's quite an interesting novel and I link it with *Nineteen Eighty Four* a lot * thankfully my mother forced me to read it so when the teacher comments on it I always have answers * and tutorials because I have [teacher's name] and she's very personal and we just talk about everything and even my problems she can understand them and she helps me all the time

INTERVIEWER: and how about the poetry lessons/

STUDENT: Wilfred Owen I enjoy a lot * his imagery is sometimes not difficult to understand but I like it * I understand what his main goal was and how ignorant some people actually were in World War One * but I enjoy everything basically * crit this year I've had some problems because the teacher sometimes I tend to disagree with * I'm quite specific with teachers sometimes and if I don't agree with them I won't really enjoy the lesson

INTERVIEWER: when you say disagree with them in what sense/

STUDENT: like I'm very picky with the message of the poem * the message of the whole poem * if I get that wrong I'm afraid I'm going to get the whole thing wrong so I'm constantly focusing on the message * getting the meaning out of it * if I don't get it right I won't be able to continue * crit what I start with is the title * I say what does the title mean/ and if it's a long title I would comment on that and contrast it with a shorter title * for example 'The Jaguar' in the crit essay I said this title has two meanings * I didn't go into the poem * I just said it seems to mean

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

STUDENT: I read a lot of newspaper articles * I read the newspaper everyday at least not cover to cover but the things I enjoy most * sports holiday destinations * politics I'm not really interested in but like what happened in the law courts and all these things * I read quite a bit * magazines * books

INTERVIEWER: any favourite authors/

STUDENT: I read a good book of Jeffrey Archer and I enjoyed it a lot * I've forgotten what it's called * I enjoyed that quite a bit

INTERVIEWER: what do you understand by the term poetry/

STUDENT: poetry is an expression of * it's a means of expression basically * I mean people * for example Wilfred Owen what was his main goal/ he wanted to show that World War One wasn't all about dying a hero for your country * it meant dying in the most horrific way imaginable * getting shot getting diseases and no one cares for you * people as young as me and even younger were going and the government just closed a blind eye to it

INTERVIEWER: and how about song lyrics/

STUDENT: I actually love song lyrics * people say they like songs because they make them dance * that's bullshit * I like songs because of the lyrics * for example my favourite lyrics are by Five for Fighting and the song is called Superman * it's about that men aren't supermen basically and there's lyric which goes men weren't to fly with clouds between their knees

INTERVIEWER: which bands or which musicians do you particularly enjoy because of their lyrics/

STUDENT: anything * Michael Buble I like him a lot * he talks about love he talks about how he misses these people * he also takes old songs and makes them his own but his own songs are sometimes really really good and I really enjoy them

INTERVIEWER: and do you consider song lyrics to be poetry/

STUDENT: yes definitely * sometimes poetry isn't just a group of words that rhyme but sometimes they don't really rhyme * the poems we do in our seminars don't rhyme at all * lyrics are just like poetry * they have a special meaning

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading or listening to poetry/

STUDENT: I prefer listening because sometimes when I'm reading a poem again I have the problem of trying to figure out the meaning * sometimes when I hear it from someone else I say ah that's quite easy * it's not a difficult poem to understand

because in my mind I'll be looking at one verse and trying to see what this verse actually means * the punctuation enjambment and all these things

INTERVIEWER: do you read poetry for personal pleasure or for study purposes/

STUDENT: study purposes mostly * I enjoy poetry to a certain extent but when I'm at home I'd rather listen to some music * I prefer reading lyrics rather than reading poetry

INTERVIEWER: are there any poets whose work you particularly enjoy/

STUDENT: Ted Hughes I like him * Wilfred Owen especially * Shakespeare has a few sonnets I like

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about choice of poems * do you like all or any of Wilfred Owen's poems/

STUDENT: ** there are quite a few that I like * there's 'Strange Meeting' * that's very strange and it's a bit too much to handle * it's grotesque and very deep and 'The Show' as well * that's one of my least favourite ones * but like 'Greater Love' I enjoy * there's S.I.W. and 'Disabled'

INTERVIEWER: why do you like them/

STUDENT: because they show what actually happened and people didn't die for glory and as heroes * they experienced the worst things ever

INTERVIEWER: do you like all or any of the poems that you do during your literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: during my crit lessons I do find the poetry a bit ** uninteresting

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: I don't know * it's just that sometimes the meaning puts me off a lot * again it's because of the meaning * unless I find the meaning and I know it's the right meaning without asking the teacher I'm going to just worry about and I'm not going to say I like it * if I have to read between the lines all the time it's going to be very difficult for me

INTERVIEWER: why do you say that you worry about it/

STUDENT: because I'm afraid that if I get it wrong the whole crit essay is going to wrong * out of 40 I'm going to get a 0

INTERVIEWER: when you say that you don't really like them is it because of the choice of poems/

STUDENT: sometimes yes and sometimes ** like I said it's just difficult to understand

INTERVIEWER: and how about the poems that we assign you for your tutorials/

STUDENT: the last one * 'Variations on the Word Love' that was quite a good poem * I liked that * it was nice to see Margaret Atwood as a poet * it was like a breath of fresh air from the book * the other poems I can't honestly remember them but in general I think I like most of them

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: I'm not quite sure * the teacher no/

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about that/

STUDENT: sometimes the poems that she gives us are a bit odd * I don't argue with her but like yesterday we did this very ambiguous poem and the imagery was very intricate * the poem was really difficult to understand unless you knew what the poet was talking about * that basically happens a lot in poetry * unless you know what the poem is all about it's impossible to decipher it

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that students might be encouraged to bring in song lyrics and poems to class/

STUDENT: actually I would enjoy that

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: I enjoy * like my uncle once told me he writes his own poetry * but it's not deep meaning poetry but comical poetry * he pokes fun at our family that kind of thing * I actually did it once and everyone laughed and I mean it was fun ** so if I had to bring poems or lyrics even I would tell the others * that songs aren't just about music but this person obviously went through something and is expressing himself through the song * and what better way to do it other than lyrics or poetry

INTERVIEWER: and what would be the advantage of you choosing the poem rather than the teacher/

STUDENT: the advantage would be that I would be able to relate to it * I mean I could choose songs or poetry that I can relate to

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about studying poetry * why do we study poetry/

STUDENT: we study poetry to understand poetry

INTERVIEWER: meaning/

STUDENT: we study poetry to acquire the skill * no one is great at understanding poetry * you start at one level and you gradually increase that level

INTERVIEWER: should we continue studying poetry in this day and age/

STUDENT: ** some people might agree with me some people might not agree but I think we should

INTERVIEWER: some people say we shouldn't in this day and age * what do you think about that/

STUDENT: we I think it's wrong because it's a large piece of our culture and I mean it's not as if we Maltese don't do poetry * we have all these poets in Malta

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy studying poetry/

STUDENT: yes I do * I always like to find meaning * I always like to see these things * reading a poem is one thing but understanding a poem and understanding its deep meaning and actually linking it properly using the proper diction and knowing this will actually get me good marks makes me quite happy doing it

INTERVIEWER: if I say poetry lesson to you what comes to mind/

STUDENT: difficult not easy at all [laughs] * not not easy but it's a challenge * that's a better word * challenge * because if it's quite easy it's not fun * I mean I accept a challenge and I enjoy it so it's quite a challenge

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you like about your poetry lessons/ let's start with your lectures moving on to the seminars and then finally your tutorials

STUDENT: the poetry lectures are different from others * the other lectures I enjoy because sometimes I find that what I may think is different from what my fellow students think * though I may agree with them or disagree with them I still take heed of what they say so it's good * I mean I go to private lessons and sometimes people don't speak at all and sometimes I find it really frustrating because then the teacher looks at me and expects me to give him an answer * even if I don't have an answer I'm going to look like a fool * I'm lucky because sometimes in my class I have people actually speaking up * in my lectures * and the teacher gets really angry if we don't * and last year [teacher's name] actually started shouting at them because they weren't speaking and I still felt at blame because I knew the answers but I was afraid to give him because I wanted other people to get a chance and I was afraid people would start thinking badly of me * but during Owen lectures we don't really get a chance to speak

INTERVIEWER: and how about your seminars on poetry/

STUDENT: seminars yes * yesterday I had one * we had this poem and I thought this way and my teacher gave me another interpretation and I did agree with her * she

gave a really good view of the thing * I hadn't seen it at all and then I was able to build on that thing

INTERVIEWER: and how about your tutorials on poetry/

STUDENT: tutorials again since I'm quite close to [teacher's name] I can speak about anything and any problems that I talk about she always either helps me or tells me how to do it so I'm quite thankful * I'm lucky in a way to have her as a teacher

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you don't like about your poetry lessons/ let start with your Owen lectures

STUDENT: what happens is that sometimes she'd go too deeply into the poem and you say that's a bit funny * quite farfetched

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you don't like about your seminars/

STUDENT: once what happened was which really put me off the seminars was * no one was talking and I said OK this can't be and I blurted out an answer which I thought was the right answer * no one was talking and she was getting all upset and I said miss this could actually mean I don't know * and she shushed me up * what do you expect me to do if no one's talking and I have an answer/ I felt quite insulted at that

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you don't like about your tutorials/

STUDENT: sometimes no * we do go a bit off topic but sometimes you need that in a lesson * sometimes she does that quite a lot * she starts talking about other stuff * completely unrelated to the poem * like giving blood and that kind of thing * not really anything wrong with it but sometimes I do like to keep on the subject

INTERVIEWER: what do you usually do during your poetry lessons/ starting with your Wilfred Owen lectures

STUDENT: Wilfred Owen/ we sit down she tells us to open the book and she starts dictating whatever she thinks about the poem * what I do is I just get out a piece of paper and start writing as fast as I can whatever she says * she doesn't really give us time to question because it's more of what she says that goes * it's not as if she listens to our views * it's a bit funny I don't like that because there isn't enough * interaction * there's no interaction actually * not at all really * you get one or two questions coming from the students but they won't really be about what he actually means * sometimes the questions are can I go to the bathroom/

INTERVIEWER: what does usually happen during a poetry crit seminar/

STUDENT: what we do is she gives us a poem * beforehand the week before she tells us we have a poem and she tells us write as much as you can about it * just short notes not a whole essay * just what you see and what you find and then we go through it together * I feel that's good because you have your own interpretation and then you say I didn't see this I didn't comment on this * during the lesson she asks us to tell her what we've written and she comments on it and we work on it

INTERVIEWER: and during a tutorial what usually happens/

STUDENT: in tutorials she reads our crit essays and she tells us where we've gone wrong and what we missed out and she gives us the chance to rewrite it * if there are things which are completely wrong or which we've completely missed out she gives us two days to rewrite it to give us a better mark * which is quite fair I think because sometimes we get a poem and she says things which I would have completely missed out and I'd be practically ashamed to give it to her because I'd be missing out all these important things ** we don't read out the essay in class * we just grab a chair and we sit next to her and she goes through it with us like a one on one thing * I prefer that actually

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy what you usually do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: for myself I would say yes * for others I couldn't say I couldn't really speak for them but sometimes you see them not participating at all just keeping their heads down and sometimes I feel a bit silly to speak

INTERVIEWER: why do they do that/

STUDENT: because they don't feel confident in the way they can express themselves * I mean I don't know but I don't want to sound prejudiced but thankfully I came from an English speaking school and you can tell that I can speak louder and with more confidence than the other people * sometimes I feel that they just don't have the confidence to do it

INTERVIEWER: is there anything else that you would you like to do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: in Owen lectures more interaction with the teachers * instead of telling us what it actually is asking what we actually think about it so that then we can actually think of our own interpretation rather than the teachers' only * in my seminars that example I gave you when she told me to be quiet * I don't want that to happen again * and in tutorials I'm OK with

INTERVIEWER: what are you gaining out of your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: culture and an understanding of better things * I mean you need to have a bit of culture in life you need to have poetry you need to know these things * otherwise what kind of conversations are you going to have * are you just going to talk about football all the time/ I mean I like football and politics but I'd rather talk about cultural stuff * things I've read

INTERVIEWER: have your poetry lessons at Junior College encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure/

STUDENT: there were times when I actually said * when I had a poem and I thought this poem is quite good maybe I should look up another one * there were instances when I actually did that but not regularly * just once in a blue moon

INTERVIEWER: do your poetry teachers read poetry/

STUDENT: I'm sure they do * [teacher's name] has a cool poet's society * although it's a funny name * I don't really like it * I'm sure she does and she keeps encouraging us to go to the library and she refers to a wide selection of poets

INTERVIEWER: how about the other poetry teachers/

STUDENT: Wilfred Owen she's never said anything * she always stuck to the subject of Wilfred Owen * I mean she doesn't really tell us you should read this you should read that * and then my tutorial teacher she tells us sometimes I read this poem you should really read it and encourages us to read

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that your poetry teachers should share what they're reading with you/

STUDENT: I think it's good * it's interesting because what better person to tell you about what to read than an English teacher * who told me/ [teacher's name] said that the English department is the department with the most teachers who have a PhD * so what better place to find these things than PhD teachers

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing poetry * have you ever written any poetry/

STUDENT: song lyrics I've written * poetry I have * taking the mickey out of my family sometimes

INTERVIEWER: so when you wrote poetry why did you do it/

STUDENT: inspiration * and I really enjoyed it

INTERVIEWER: do you write poetry regularly/

STUDENT: no! rarely

INTERVIEWER: and song lyrics/

STUDENT: once I wrote song lyrics * I'm that creative I have to admit * there was a time in my early teenage years when I began enjoying music I began playing guitar the piano and I tried to incorporate some lyrics * I did it out of enjoyment

INTERVIEWER: and do you still do this/

STUDENT: well not really * it was a phase basically * now I do play the guitar as much as I can but I don't spend nights doing it * I used to sleep at 3 o'clock writing things and playing

INTERVIEWER: would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

STUDENT: I mean once in junior 5 way back when I was nine we had to write a poem as an exam and my mother didn't really like it * she said why are they telling you to do this/ you're only nine years old * but there was nothing wrong * I mean I enjoy writing poetry * I got a really good mark in it I remember * an eight on ten or something like that * it rhymed and was funny

INTERVIEWER: so what if we had to encourage you to do it as part of your crit seminars for example/

STUDENT: I wouldn't mind * I'm sure people would actually give it a try

INTERVIEWER: would there be any advantages to it/

STUDENT: expression * people would let off some steam maybe * using metaphors to mean other things

INTERVIEWER: would it help you with your own study of poetry/

STUDENT: there's one part of writing poetry and there's another part of actually analysing poetry and it's quite different * although you can incorporate the two now that I'm thinking about it * use rhyme and metre figures of speech and diction * actually yes you can * I've changed my mind [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing about poetry * what have your teachers told you to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: basically in the introduction they tell us introduce your essay * you don't say that you're going to talk about these titles because that's childish and you don't get any marks for doing it * you have to be a bit deep when you're writing it you have to be a bit original * you have to say Wilfred Owen did this because he felt etc etc and then

INTERVIEWER: and what have your teachers told you to do when writing an essay on an unseen poem/

STUDENT: basically they told us * because there are two ways * there's one where you go chronologically line by line and then there's the way in which you focus on diction and tone and imagery * I find that a bit difficult because chronologically even though it takes a long time it's more safe and it's not risky so to speak * it's easier * you can look at everything * the other method is difficult because you have to skip from one part of the poem in order to discuss tone for example and people like myself get confused doing that * although it's what MATSEC expects of you * but honestly I prefer doing it chronologically * I've heard of people doing it chronologically and getting an A

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to read you a definition and then I'm going to ask you a question about it * personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry/

STUDENT: the conclusion is the only place where I do it because once I got quite a big shouting at from a teacher because what I spoke about in the essay was not how other people talk about the poem but I think this I think that and so on * and all wrong I got it and she said the only place where you can give your own opinion is the conclusion * and I said OK fair enough I just have to do my research and do it again

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: [silent reading of poem] it's exactly what I do [laughs] * tying it to a chair and interrogating it until I get a confession out of it

INTERVIEWER: do you feel that you torture a poem/

STUDENT: sometimes I do yes

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because as I've said I'm so obsessed with finding the meaning that * finding the meaning at all costs basically * last time I gave myself an hour and half limit * I wasn't completely ready for the exam so I gave myself and hour and a half to finish a crit essay and I finished it in two hours * I was constantly saying what does this mean/ what does this mean/ and could this actually mean this/ and I was getting afraid that I was actually digging too deep * and I said it can't be * I have to

stop this * I have to because I'm not going to finish at all * I'm going to finish in three hours basically

INTERVIEWER: do you think that your class adopts the same attitude when it comes to poetry/

STUDENT: no I have a friend who actually once during the lesson we were doing this crit essay and he came half an hour late and we were split up into groups I was there for all the lesson but he came late and he beat me because he just wrote about the thing and he actually got a higher mark than me * and the teachers just told me because you're too obsessed with the meaning * you have to stop doing this * you have to talk about the language and the meaning even if you think it's wrong just support it with evidence

INTERVIEWER: do your teachers adopt the attitude mentioned by the speaker in the poem/

STUDENT: to take it lightly no/ enjoying it rather than going so deeply into it/ * no actually * it's more the technical details that they focus on * they ask us to find all these things * all the metaphors the diction and everything the punctuation and the structure * we are always looking out for these things * we have to identify all the things that we would need for the crit essay

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to show you a video and I'd like you to tell me more about this

STUDENT: [watches video] like I said before many of us are hell bent on finding the meaning * without the meaning we feel lost * with the meaning we feel secure * knowing that with it we can safely continue the poem * without it it would almost be impossible to write an essay

INTERVIEWER: earlier you mentioned that you enjoy listening to poetry * what do you think of the video/

STUDENT: the video * he gave us a visual interpretation of how to tie up the thing but really I saw it * before the video I saw it as someone being tied and slapped around and a bright light shone into his eyes

INTERVIEWER: so which one do you prefer yours or the one in the video/

STUDENT: mine actually because the hand even though it was a symbol for poetry I couldn't really imagine it that way in my mind * I imagined a person being poetry

INTERVIEWER: did the video add anything/

STUDENT: yes yes * it gave me a clearer meaning of what it meant because mine was a bit fantastical

INTERVIEWER: thanks a lot for participating in this interview

Appendix 36 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Student J

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * which lessons do you like most out of your entire English course/

STUDENT: the poetry lessons where we have criticism

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: well it's mostly because I like reading new texts * I don't really get the time at home to actually look up new texts by myself and I like the way that we have to actually analyse them and now it's come into my life like when I read a book I can't help but actually analyse it on my own * it actually helps though because now I actually look for the hidden meanings and for certain things so

INTERVIEWER: and do you do this also in relation to song lyrics for example/

STUDENT: sometimes yes when I can actually understand the poetic meaning of it all then I actually dig into it and it actually helps

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

STUDENT: novels and short stories

INTERVIEWER: do you have any favourite authors/

STUDENT: it depends * I'm not very picky about the genre * it doesn't really matter but I do have favourites obviously * Stephen King is my favourite author * I like fantasies as well like J.K. Rowling Tolkien * that kind of thing

INTERVIEWER: what do you understand by the term poetry/

STUDENT: poetry is an expression of emotions and human things that you can't describe in other words * you do use normal words in poetry but you have to read them in such a way that you can actually make the emotions tangible * in a little bit of text you can feel the emotions * if it's written well of course

INTERVIEWER: do you consider song lyrics to be poetry/

STUDENT: * yes if they're written well enough * I mean you do find song lyrics that are mostly poetry like ballads that tell a story for example * there are some songs that are written in ways that seem to be poetry even if they don't rhyme * it's more the

content of something that makes it poetry than the way it's written that makes it poetry to me

INTERVIEWER: are there any musicians or bands whose lyrics you particularly enjoy because you consider them to be poetic/

STUDENT: ** yes actually * there is Panic at the Disco and they have * the way the lyrics are written are story telling but it's not really obvious * you have to listen to it over and over again in order for you to say ah that's the story * it's written in such a way that it's not very obvious but once you get there you notice * and I love songs which are like that because it just clicks and it's wow! OK! * it changes the song completely and it makes more sense by the end of it ** I like to read the lyrics just so I know what I'm listening to so I have this thing where I want to know what they're saying because then it obviously helps me understand it better

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading or listening to poetry/

STUDENT: I love reading poetry * listening to it not so much ** I don't really and sometimes I don't really enjoy hearing people reading it out loud because they read in a different pace than I do and it just kind of bugs me because I have my own pace and I don't like people who go slower or faster and it doesn't really appeal to me * so I like reading on my own mostly * when someone explains it to me I don't really mind but if someone had to read it they need to have my very same pace to actually get me really into it

INTERVIEWER: are there any favourite poets whose work you enjoy reading/

STUDENT: Lord Byron for one * Shakespeare I have a book of his sonnets so I really love them * particularly not any poet * T. S. Eliot * but those are the ones that come to mind right now * I don't really have favourite poets * I don't see a poem and I say I know this one * that kind of thing

INTERVIEWER: do you read poetry for personal pleasure or for study purposes/

STUDENT: personal pleasure * I used to read it for personal pleasure but nowadays I just don't have time to look it up but I used to look up poetry just to read it because I don't know * I used to look for poetry on the internet * I used to write just a certain phrase and read the poems that come up just for that

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about choice of poems * do you like all or any of Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: I do like his poetry actually * the war poems since we study them I know them well and I actually do kind of like them so * I've never read any of his other poems though * just the war poems * I like most of them I think

INTERVIEWER: any favourites/

STUDENT: 'Le Christianisme' I really like that one * 'S.I.W.' * 'Disabled' * I think those especially

INTERVIEWER: why do you like these in particular/

STUDENT: 'S.I.W.' I love the way it's written in parts and I know it's quite true * I mean obviously all his poems are true but this one just struck me because of all the whole suicide thing and that always strikes me because I always love stories that have to do with that because it goes into human insight like real human nature like when they get to a certain point and break and that poem illustrates it perfectly * 'Disabled' even the way it's written with the flashbacks * it's not told in a storytelling way but you can still find the story in it * it's very obvious * and 'Le Christianisme' is very short and yet in eight lines it reveals a lot and I think that's why I like it so much because it shows so much in such a short stanza * it's very hard for a poet to actually do that

INTERVIEWER: and how about those poems that you don't like/ * why don't you like them/

STUDENT: sometimes I find them to be a bit repetitive I guess * one of them is 'Dulce' for the simple reason that I've done it at O-level as well so I'm kind of bored of it by now but there are other poems that are so repetitive * the same theme over and over again * it's like get on with it I get it OK!

INTERVIEWER: and how about the poems that you do for your literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: I like the poems that [teacher's name] prepares for us * they're very varied * some of them are very metaphorical and I love that because you have to dig in for the meaning * but then when he does other poems that have nothing to do with that then it just adds more variety and I think that's important

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: [teacher's name]

INTERVIEWER: what do you think about that/

STUDENT: I think that's good because he's been teaching for quite a while now so he has insight into certain poets and poetry and he knows what we should be trained

for so the fact that the teacher is giving us the material in a way makes it easy for us and at the same time is quite ** well he knows best

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that we should encourage you to bring in poems and song lyrics to class/

STUDENT: that would be a good idea actually yes

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: you're given a chance to express your own taste I guess with everyone else * you might someone who has the same taste as you so it could be a great conversation starter I guess but you need to know what other people think * I mean there are always people who like some poems but not others

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about studying poetry * why do we study poetry/

STUDENT: *** I think that we study poetry for understanding in a way * as A-level students we obviously study it because of all the literary devices and all that but I think that humans in general well they study poetry because it gives them insight on their on lives * it helps them understand certain things * rather than putting them into words you put them into poetry * it helps us to understand

INTERVIEWER: should we continue studying poetry in this day and age/

STUDENT: yes actually * there are people who say that you shouldn't but I think they're wrong because poetry is an art and people still study art so why not poetry * it is a very skilful art and very few people can actually write good poetry so why not study it * it's something beautiful and well written and you'd be surprised by how much poetry can help someone so

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy studying poetry/

STUDENT: I don't mind it actually * it's something different than studying a normal text a normal book * it's different to a novel even if written in a regular structure it's irregular to a novel

INTERVIEWER: if I say poetry lesson to you what comes to mind/

STUDENT: ** criticism class where they give us a poem we've never seen before or possibly may have but the chances are slim

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you like about your poetry lessons/ let's start with your lectures moving on to the seminars and ending with the tutorials

STUDENT: alright Wilfred Owen * I do like that we focus on one poet and well his style changes from one poem to another * he's not that kind of poet who sticks to a certain style of verse * he always tries to switch around so that gives you an insight

on how one poet can write in so many different ways * criticism because it just shows you how talented some people can be * it just shows me the different styles that there are * I mean you can see the different styles in Wilfred Owen but with different people it just comes out more and you see different ways of writing because everyone has their own way * tutorials I enjoy because you actually get to hear what your other classmates think about poems * I mean you might see this poem in one way and the person sitting next to me would see it in a completely different way but it would still be valuable and then I get to see it from their point of view and say ah OK! that actually makes sense

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you don't like about your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: mostly about Wilfred Owen because like I said he's repetitive but I think we have to have an element of repetitiveness within Owen because he does talk about the same thing * war and you have * for our exam we have to know themes and stuff * I guess the fact that it's a bit repetitive helps for the exam because you do have to know those things

INTERVIEWER: what do you usually do during your poetry lessons/ starting with your lectures

STUDENT: in lectures basically you just sit and read through the poem with our teacher and he would give us notes * occasionally stop to explain a certain phrase that we nowadays might not understand * it could be a reference to something that happened before * and then he would give us quite a chunk of explanation about the poem and the theme and the structure and the history behind it and all that * in seminars we're given a poem * we read it on our own and then the sir reads it back to us and he explains the things that we won't understand or asks us to explain them to him and if need be he would give us a short essay about how we should answer a question if it had to come out about the topic * and in tutorial we normally sit and each of us reads the essay we wrote and then our teacher would give us either a model or would explain during our reading of it what we should arrange

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy what you usually do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: yes actually ** in lectures you have to take the word of the teacher * I mean he does know Owen best so * obviously you do have questions when you don't understand but I think that that's a good way to teach Owen * in seminar I actually think that it's a good thing to get people to participate because seminars are actually about seeing what other people think about poetry

INTERVIEWER: does that happen/

STUDENT: yes actually * our class has very opinionated views so I like that * we can actually discuss openly what we think and talk about the material so I like that

INTERVIEWER: and your tutorials/

STUDENT: well like I said we all have different views on the poem so I do like that we get to share with the rest of the group and that our teacher can get to not reprimand us but help us to make it better * so I do like that because we do need guidance

INTERVIEWER: is there anything else that you would you like to do during your poetry lessons/ during your lectures seminars and tutorials

STUDENT: mostly during our seminars * I would actually like if maybe once to actually try our own writing of poetry because I think that everyone can do it and it would just be nice if maybe we had one lesson where we could just have a forty minute session where we could just write out something quickly even if it's not that good * it would just show us how hard poetry can be to write or how easy it could be to write sometimes as well * it would put us in the perspective of what the poet actually goes through when he writes something

INTERVIEWER: and during your lectures and tutorials/

STUDENT: as I said during Owen lectures it's the teacher who talks but he has to * he knows Owen best our teacher so us students we only know one poem from our O-level so it's good that we have a lot of teacher input because it just guides us along

INTERVIEWER: what are you gaining out of your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: well with Owen I'm gaining a lot of historical background to be honest * I have history at intermediate so that actually really helps * in seminars I'm getting a better understanding of what people write about because the poems I read were always focused on emotions and feelings and the poems that we're reading now are all different and they just give you a better understanding of what people actually write about * they can make the dullest of things so interesting * I like that we get to see that side of poetry

INTERVIEWER: and out of your tutorials what are you gaining/

STUDENT: I'm gaining guidance in writing essays * I need that help * I need the extra push the extra little help so I like that we get the chance to actually learn how we should do things before we go for our exams

INTERVIEWER: have your poetry lessons at Junior College encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure/

STUDENT: I used to read poetry for pleasure before so not really * I've always done it so it hasn't really had an impact on me that much

INTERVIEWER: will you continue reading poetry in the future/

STUDENT: yes definitely

INTERVIEWER: do your poetry teachers read poetry/

STUDENT: I think they do * I think they must because to have a certain understanding of poetry you can't just read one poet * you have to read a bunch of poets and then you can actually understand the one * I think they all do actually * I mean I'm sure that [teacher's name] does

INTERVIEWER: why do you feel sure about that/

STUDENT: he seems to have a very good understanding of certain poems and well the book we use is his and I'm sure that he's read every single one of the poems in his book and I'm pretty sure that he's read quite a bit so

INTERVIEWER: have your poetry teachers ever shared with you poems that they're reading/

STUDENT: not that I recall actually * they've never actually mentioned anything * I'm sure that [teacher's name] has mentioned something but I'm sure that he has said that there is a certain poet that he's read

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that your poetry teachers should share what they're reading with you/

STUDENT: that would be a good idea I think actually * well like I said before you need to see what other people enjoy about poetry * their insights and a teacher would have different insights from those of students so a teacher could share a poem with a class and maybe get somebody interested in that poem

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing poetry * have you ever written any poetry/

STUDENT: yes!

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: I don't really have a reason why * it's just that I grab a piece of paper and scribble something oh! it's a poem

INTERVIEWER: how long have you been doing it/

STUDENT: I think about five years now

INTERVIEWER: do you do it regularly/

STUDENT: not as of late * I've moved on to writing short stories now but before I used to write a lot more * I've only written two actually in this scholastic year so

INTERVIEWER: have you ever shown your poetry to your friends and family/

STUDENT: friends * I'm actually scared of showing it to my family but I actually show them a lot to my friends * I've even put some on the internet around and strangers actually give the best criticism sometimes * when they don't know you they're not afraid to show your flaws in the poem so I have put them up online and I have got good reviews I guess * I do rely on what people tell me about them * I don't just rely on myself because you are your own worst critic

INTERVIEWER: will you continue writing poetry in the future/

STUDENT: if the muse comes to me * I don't really force it * it would usually be just a flash of inspiration * I never force the inspiration

INTERVIEWER: have you ever written any song lyrics/

STUDENT: no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: I find it difficult actually to write song lyrics * the fact that there has to be the music to it and I'm not much of a musician * I think in order to write song lyrics you have to have a very general insight on music and mechanics of it all and if you don't then the song lyrics will not actually come out that well so

INTERVIEWER: would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

STUDENT: yes actually

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: to give me the opportunity to actually try my hand at it in a school environment * I mean I've done it at home but in a school environment it's different * at school I imagine they'd give us a theme and it would be a challenge so I could actually challenge myself for once to write a poem and make it good

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing about poetry * what have your teachers told you to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: to never summarise * to actually go into the depth of it depending on the question of course * for example if the question is about theme and imagery forget the story of it and just dive right into it and quote * that's one of the most important

things * you need to quote as much as you possibly can * at least one quote from each poem * well those are the most important points

INTERVIEWER: and what have they told you to do when writing an essay on an unseen poem/

STUDENT: to separate the paragraphs * so theme in one paragraph language in another and so on * to always remember not to give your own opinion * always in the end if you must * and to never go in chronological order

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to read you a definition and then I'm going to ask you a question about it * personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry/

STUDENT: only at the very end * normally I just include one or two sentences about what I think and if I agree or not depending on the subject of the poem and if it doesn't have anything to agree with then normally if I like it or not and why it's effective * that's usually what I do

INTERVIEWER: and what do your teachers tell you to do when it comes to personal response/

STUDENT: actually they tell us to include it in the conclusion so as not to throw the whole thing off and turn it into an opinion essay

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: [silent reading of poem] I think it actually makes a lot of sense * it's true * as students we have the tendency to constantly dig into the poem * we want to understand it word by word * in a way we've lost what poetry is all about * for us poetry has to have a sort of hidden mystery in it and as students I think that most of us find it irritating that there's that hidden meaning * and we sort of want to strip it all down and find out what it really means * then we do actually strip it down to a point where it makes no sense anymore * it's lost its complete meaning so I actually think that this is really true

INTERVIEWER: and how about your teachers/ what attitude do they adopt/

STUDENT: they tell us to ask questions * try to understand it * I think that sometimes they do instil this into us that we want to strip it down because we're used

to wanting to understand the whole thing but I don't think that that's the right way to go about it * I think they should at least leave a certain element of mystery to the whole poem

INTERVIEWER: and why do students tie the poem to a chair and torture it/

STUDENT: they're just restricted to one thing * as soon as they realise what it's about they just squeeze it * it's like a prisoner of war and they try to take every piece of information out of it to understand it and ultimately they just end up killing it

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to show you a video and I'd like you to tell me a bit more about that

STUDENT: [watches video] well the video is actually pretty good * when you think of a poem you think of it in an abstract way * I like they way they've made it tangible for once * I like that

INTERVIEWER: is the video still describing your experience in the classroom/

STUDENT: yes actually * I mean it is quite true * it's basically the same thing * it's showing us the students are always trying to understand something that they can't understand and always trying to dig into it and trying to get to it

INTERVIEWER: thanks a lot for participating in this interview

Appendix 37 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Student K

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * which lessons do you like most out of your entire English course/

STUDENT: mostly the criticism and literature lessons * the books and the poetry

INTERVIEWER: when you say criticism which particular aspect of it/ prose or poetry/

STUDENT: ** both

INTERVIEWER: and why do you prefer crit/

STUDENT: I was always interested in books so I guess it helps me more if I read a book * to analyse it in more detail * not just read it and miss certain details * so crit helps me to understand more of the text

INTERVIEWER: you mentioned poetry * why do you like that/

STUDENT: Wilfred Owen started the interest in poetry in me because I didn't use to read poetry much but I used to like it in secondary school * but doing Owen just stimulated the interest you know * I got more interested in poetry

INTERVIEWER: do you read more poetry as a result of your lessons/

STUDENT: sometimes I do and every now and then I try to write a bit of verse * but it's not that good

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

STUDENT: mostly fiction * I was really interested in the Harry Potter books but now that's passed * perhaps not adventure but more like a mystery or an analysis of a life or maybe something mysterious and scary

INTERVIEWER: do you have any favourite authors/

STUDENT: favourite authors/ * William Peter Blatty * J.K. Rowling ** what's his name/ * I forget their names * those are the only two I can remember

INTERVIEWER: what do you understand by the term poetry/

STUDENT: ** when I was younger I used to think of it as just rhyming sentences under each other * perhaps now I understand it more as a way of reflecting your thoughts and * putting thought into writing in a more lyrical way maybe * I mean it

doesn't have to rhyme but it has to go in a sequence * that makes more interesting in a sense

INTERVIEWER: do you consider song lyrics to be poetry/

STUDENT: I guess so yes * there are some songs even modern ones * some I'm not saying all * nowadays some music is not good * for example Green Day my favourite band I consider it * their lyrics are poetry because of its meanings and what it expresses * usually it contains anti political or perhaps religion and the dark aspects or life and how people's ideas are sometimes strange or contradictory * so it doesn't have to be just on a paper * even sung

INTERVIEWER: for song lyrics to be considered poetry in your opinion what do they need to have/

STUDENT: ** they mustn't be superficial * you can't just write a song and say I'm going to make money * it has to have a deep meaning * how do you say/ it has to touch your heart * it has to touch you in a way and make you reflect more

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading or listening to poetry/

STUDENT: I enjoy reading it but if I could listen to it I'd like that even more

INTERVIEWER: have you ever tried to listen to poetry/ on YouTube or a CD for example

STUDENT: yes

INTERVIEWER: is there a difference between reading and listening to poetry/

STUDENT: I don't know to tell you the truth * but I think there is a difference in the experience because when you read it you just have it in your head but if you hear it perhaps you understand the rhythm more * for example last year there was a poem and I liked it and I sort of started reading it aloud and it helped me understand it even more * even the effects * you shout out a word or you say it softly according to its sense or what it's supposed to say * sort of it brings out the effect even more

INTERVIEWER: do you read poetry for personal pleasure or for study purposes/

STUDENT: both * I mostly read the poetry that I need to write about for my A-level but perhaps for pleasure I do sometimes

INTERVIEWER: can you name any poets whose work you enjoy reading/

STUDENT: can't say much because I just get a book with a lot of poems in it and I skim through it * for example *The Dragon Book of Verse*

INTERVIEWER: is there any particular poet who comes to mind whenever you think of poetry/ or any particular poem that you really enjoy/

STUDENT: *** perhaps William Shakespeare * the sonnets and ** Wilfred Owen because those are the ones who I'm most acquainted to

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about choice of poems * do you like all or any of Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: I like them all equally

INTERVIEWER: but are there any favourites/

STUDENT: favourites/ * maybe 'Strange Meeting' * perhaps 'At a Calvary near the Ancre' * 'Deadbeat' or 'The Sentry' * 'Mental Cases'

INTERVIEWER: and why do you like these poems in particular/

STUDENT: they're sort of very effective * they show the personal experience of the soldiers * for example 'Strange Meeting' I like it because it's sort of like Dante's *Divine Comedy* * it's mysterious and it's sort of reflective * I like the reflective poems like even 'Mental Cases' * it shows the mental lives of these soldiers * it shows the effects of war * that's what I like

INTERVIEWER: and how about the poems that you do for your literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: I like most of them but sometimes I don't like when it's really not confusing but you have to really delve into it and it's sort of completely different from what you think it is * for example there's a poem * something about a spider on a flower and it catches insects and the meaning was like either there is control in nature * there's something in control or everything is random and chaotic and there's nothing to control it * and I so deviated from what it meant that I sort of didn't like it that much

INTERVIEWER: why don't you like certain poems/

STUDENT: perhaps because they're how do say/ * poems that I can't really understand much

INTERVIEWER: and would you say that this applies to the majority of the poems that you read in crit/

STUDENT: not the majority no

INTERVIEWER: do you like any of the poems that you're assigned for your tutorials/

STUDENT: usually I get to like them after we've done the tutorial * sometimes I need to get acquainted with it first * maybe the first time I read it I wouldn't like it

but once I study it even more and I write my essay I get to appreciate it * for example 'Variations on the Word Love' * the more I analysed the more I appreciated it

INTERVIEWER: why do you like that poem/

STUDENT: because it shows how love is now being made superficial and sold and bought and you can't find authentic love much nowadays

INTERVIEWER: is this the kind of poetry that you like/

STUDENT: yes poetry that shows the reality of life and thoughts

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: [teacher's name] she has a booklet * we bought it and it has a hundred poems in it and she chooses from them

INTERVIEWER: what do you think about that/

STUDENT: I think it's a good thing * instead of just handing us handouts it's better to have them all together in a booklet

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that we should encourage you to bring poems song and lyrics to class/

STUDENT: I think that would be a great idea

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: it would make students appreciate poetry even more * poetry isn't just a mathematical sequence of verse * for example that film *The Dead Poets' Society* * it shows the true meaning of poetry * it's not just something in a book * it's life * like William Blake * that's who I forgot to mention * I like his poems because they show both the joy of life * innocence of children * and the dark reality of life

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about studying poetry * why do we study poetry/

STUDENT: ** I don't know * I think perhaps because it helps us appreciate * because it helps us express our thoughts * I'm not so sure * some just study it because it's in the syllabus but maybe there's more to it than that

INTERVIEWER: should we continue studying poetry in this day and age/

STUDENT: yes

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: ** it's something good like * it's a work of art * a work of art should be appreciated * like a painting ** maybe it helps students be more creative as well

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy studying poetry/

STUDENT: yes I do ** perhaps because I was always attracted to reading and stuff like that when I was young

INTERVIEWER: if I say poetry lesson to you what comes to mind/

STUDENT: * the teacher giving us a poem * we analyse it and we're asked questions about it * that's what comes to mind

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you like about your poetry lessons/ let's start with your lectures moving on to the seminars and ending with the tutorials

STUDENT: yes ** mostly because there is participation from the students and that's helpful * but only in the criticism lessons * last year during the Wilfred Owen lessons I liked them because of the poems but maybe there wasn't that much communication between the students and the teacher so it's more like we read it first time and then we analyse it a bit then he explains line by line * but perhaps if he had let us participate even more we would have maybe understood or appreciated the poems even more

INTERVIEWER: and how about your poetry tutorials/ is there anything you like about them/

STUDENT: I like maybe that he discusses the poem and he lets us express our thoughts * it's not just the teacher's point of view of the poem * but it's better to ask for the students' point of view * that's what I like

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you don't like about your poetry lessons/ you mentioned for example that during your lectures on Owen there isn't so much participation * how about the seminars and the tutorials/

STUDENT: I'm fine with them * I don't know what I'd like to change in them

INTERVIEWER: what do you usually do during your poetry lessons/ starting with an Owen lecture

STUDENT: we get the book * he chooses the poem * we read it and then he explains each line in detail as we go along

INTERVIEWER: and how about the poetry seminars/

STUDENT: ** we discuss the poems in a more open way

INTERVIEWER: and in a poetry tutorial/

STUDENT: * same thing * like he asks what we didn't understand or what he wants us change in certain bits of the essay * and he perhaps gives us more information about the poem * last year we used to read our essays out loud * this year not so much but sometimes we do

INTERVIEWER: and which system do you prefer best/

STUDENT: * perhaps reading out the essay is a bit embarrassing but he points out certain things while we're reading it so perhaps it's better * I guess it's more useful

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy what you usually do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: * yes * in general it's OK

INTERVIEWER: is there anything else that you would you like to do during your poetry lessons/ during your lectures seminars and tutorials

STUDENT: not sure maybe we can analyse other things besides poetry

INTERVIEWER: such as/

STUDENT: maybe songs * I'm not so sure

INTERVIEWER: what would be the benefit of that/

STUDENT: perhaps to make students appreciate * not just students but everyone * to appreciate and understand what's a good song and what's not a good song * like most songs are very simple but perhaps other songs are like musical poems * so we by analysing them we could appreciate them even more because we could understand the song and it's not just a good melody

INTERVIEWER: and would you analyse the lyrics or the song as a whole/

STUDENT: perhaps the song as a whole * perhaps how the music goes along with the words and their meanings

INTERVIEWER: what are you gaining out of your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: perhaps hoping I could write something of my own and maybe in the future publish it

INTERVIEWER: so out of your lectures for example what are you gaining/

STUDENT: perhaps how to write better verse

INTERVIEWER: and out of your seminars and tutorials/

STUDENT: same thing * mostly how to write better

INTERVIEWER: write better essays or better verse/

STUDENT: both

INTERVIEWER: how come better verse/

STUDENT: because we read good verse and so I can perhaps imitate it

INTERVIEWER: have your poetry lessons at Junior College encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure/

STUDENT: yes *I found myself reading a bit more poetry than usual

INTERVIEWER: will you continue reading poetry in the future/

STUDENT: I hope to continue it * thanks to the lessons mostly * I wouldn't have got interested in it if I didn't have the lessons

INTERVIEWER: do your poetry teachers read poetry/

STUDENT: yes

INTERVIEWER: how do you know/

STUDENT: [teacher's name] she told us * she mentioned some anthologies she likes to read from

INTERVIEWER: and how about your other poetry teachers/

STUDENT: the Owen lecturer I'm not so sure * of the tutorials yes * even the way he appreciates poetry * also because of what he told us * like his thesis was considered the best and my friend told me that he's involved in many things * literary groups and things on writing in Malta

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that your poetry teachers should share what they're reading with you/

STUDENT: it encourages you even more * like we see someone who likes poetry and we get more encouraged to read it

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing poetry * have you ever written any poetry/

STUDENT: I tried * it's not that good * at least that's what I feel personally

INTERVIEWER: do you still write poetry/

STUDENT: right now no * I have my studies to focus on but in the summer I'd like to write some verse

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy writing poetry/

STUDENT: yes * sometimes I get a bit * not angry * a bit frustrated that I can't get what I want to say into a good poem * it's frustrating to find the right word and rhythm

INTERVIEWER: why do you enjoy writing poetry/

STUDENT: ** I just enjoy it * just as someone likes painting I enjoy writing poetry

INTERVIEWER: have you ever written any song lyrics/

STUDENT: I tried once yes * more like punk rock * sort of like anger in a way

INTERVIEWER: and have you kept at it/

STUDENT: no it was just one attempt

INTERVIEWER: would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

STUDENT: yes I think it would help me

INTERVIEWER: how/

STUDENT: it would help me write better poetry * if you just read a poem and analyse it I'm not sure it would help you write better * like for example you can analyse a painting and its details and understand what techniques he used and how he has used them to bring out an effect but it's not going to make you know how to paint * you have to try it

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing about poetry * what have your teachers told you to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: don't give a summary of the poem * that's not what they want * the meaning of the poem * not just saying first this happened and then this and then this * it's the meaning of the poem and its relation with other poems that you need to focus on

INTERVIEWER: and what have they told you to do when writing an essay on an unseen poem/

STUDENT: to analyse diction imagery style theme and tone * you identify these in the poem and write about them

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to read you a definition and then I'm going to ask you a question about it * personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry/

STUDENT: ** yes sometimes I do * perhaps the teacher might not have mentioned something and I would say what I think about it * not throughout the whole essay of course but maybe here and there I would include something of my own

INTERVIEWER: and what have your teachers told you to do when it comes to personal response/

STUDENT: not much * they don't mention it much

INTERVIEWER: and do you feel that it's important/

STUDENT: I feel it is important

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: it lets you not be original but it lets you think not just what others think * to let yourself think about the poem and not just what they tell you

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: [silent reading of poem] it is * I like it * even last year * we had a poem last year and we were trying to find * how do I say/ * I mean here it's telling you to appreciate a poem for what it really is but usually we just try to find a meaning * for example if he's talking about this then we ask why is this/ * and if he's talking about that then why is that/ * it's more like trying to find a hidden meaning in everything rather than appreciating the poem * and very often we tend to go overboard

INTERVIEWER: and why do students do that/

STUDENT: perhaps because they don't know the true meaning of poetry * even personally that's what usually happens to me

INTERVIEWER: the true meaning of poetry being/

STUDENT: ** how do you say/ * just to be appreciated or to give joy * not just to be understood but to be enjoyed too

INTERVIEWER: do your teachers adopt the attitude of the speaker in the poem/

STUDENT: yes some of them * last year especially * he told us that that's what he was trying to do with us and instead we do what the students in the poem are trying to do * get a meaning out of the poem

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to show you a video and I'd like you to tell me a bit more about that

STUDENT: [watches video] that was very good * it sort of brought the meaning even more * like with the water the word poem started fading away * it helped me reflect even more that the poem was being lost * losing its being and value * and finally you don't see a poem you just see words and that's it

INTERVIEWER: why do some students do that/

STUDENT: to get good marks maybe and fill the paper with good ideas

INTERVIEWER: thanks a lot for participating in this interview

Appendix 38 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Student L

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * which lessons do you like most out of your entire English course/

STUDENT: first preference would be drama * the *Othello* this year * and I like prose as well * *The Handmaid's Tale*

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: this year I like drama because I'm a fan of Shakespeare and I like all the politics and the irony and the whole construction of the story * and prose I like because it delves deeper into the story of the book and you get into the novel and you understand it better

INTERVIEWER: and how about poetry/

STUDENT: I like poetry * I like Wilfred Owen's poems but it's not my top preference of lesson

INTERVIEWER: and poetry crit/

STUDENT: depending on the poem because sometimes I like the poem and sometimes I don't * I prefer poems that have rhyme and sometimes when they're not so rhymed I don't really like them

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

STUDENT: novels mostly * I read poetry sometimes

INTERVIEWER: do you have any favourite authors/

STUDENT: well there is Dan Brown and Shakespeare I like reading Shakespeare's things and then there are other authors * random * just books here and there

INTERVIEWER: you've mentioned poetry * any particular poet that comes to mind/

STUDENT: Robert Frost * Alexander Pope * Ted Hughes * Alfred Tennyson * Shakespeare as well

INTERVIEWER: and do you usually read these poets for personal pleasure or for school/

STUDENT: no for personal pleasure

INTERVIEWER: what do you understand by the term poetry/

STUDENT: it's a way of expression in a different way from prose * it's differently constructed and the way you structure a poem would also contribute to the thoughts that you put into the poem

INTERVIEWER: do you consider song lyrics to be poetry/

STUDENT: yes to a certain extent they are * for example the flow in which you want the song to go is basically just poetry

INTERVIEWER: can you think of any musicians or bands whose lyrics you particularly enjoy and which you consider to be poetry/

STUDENT: well there are quite a lot * for example 30 Seconds to Mars they have a very good song because he writes about things which are deeper than the shallow things of pop culture * for example he writes about life and how you have to access it * sometimes I appreciate rap because it can be considered a form of poetry but only particular rappers

INTERVIEWER: in order for song lyrics to be poetry or for you to consider them poetry what do they need to have that makes them poetry/

STUDENT: ** well I like rhyme but if they have a good flow to the rhythm then I like that * I think that would count as poetry * it has to have a certain flow from one line to another without any jerking stops

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading or listening to poetry/

STUDENT: I prefer reading

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: I can read it at my own pace and if I don't understand something I can reread it and then I can reread it in context and I prefer seeing the structure of the poem in front of my eyes

INTERVIEWER: and how about listening to poetry/

STUDENT: I like listening to it because you can listen to it * if someone knows the poem well they can read it with the right tone and the right flow * sometimes it's better like because you can understand it more

INTERVIEWER: do you read poetry for personal pleasure or for study purposes/

STUDENT: personal pleasure mostly * I mean for study purposes here for school we only have one poet and I like to read a variety of poets and different styles of poems * for example here we're only restricted to war poems but I prefer a wider range of poems

INTERVIEWER: but you do read a variety of poems during your crit sessions

STUDENT: yes that as well

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about choice of poems * do you like all or any of Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: * I like many of his poems because despite that they're all about war but sometimes for example 'Futility' the way he wrote it is nice and I don't mind that he uses a lot of graphic images because he actually tells the truth about war * you can relate to him and you understand him and you respect him for writing against somebody who is trying to kill all those innocent people

INTERVIEWER: which are your favourite Owen poems/

STUDENT: I like 'Dulce et Decorum Est' because he really tells the truth * 'Futility' 'Greater Love' ** 'Strange Meeting' is nice and even other poems where he goes against the warmongers and the family members who tried to force him into going to war

INTERVIEWER: and which poems don't you like/

STUDENT: ** there's 'The Send-off' * I wasn't too keen on it * and 'Disabled' I really wasn't a good fan of it * I don't mind reading it but it's not one of my favourites

INTERVIEWER: any reason for that/

STUDENT: ** I didn't quite like the flow of the story * it was too mixed sort of

INTERVIEWER: how about the poems that you do for your literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: I don't like many of them because for example the last poem we had I didn't like the flow of it at all and sometimes I don't like what they write about * sometimes they're completely irrelevant to what I'm interested in * or they don't write about things which I consider deep

INTERVIEWER: do you like all or any of the poems that you're assigned for your tutorials/

STUDENT: some of them * for example some of them are deep and the way they write you have to look for the hidden context within the words but others I find sometime boring

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: either because I'm not interested in the subject or because it's about a very random and shallow topic for example * I prefer when they're deeper and when they have more complex words and the structure is thought out more thoughtfully

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for your literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: ** I don't know but I assume our teacher [teacher's name] * he likes to choose the classics and old poems for example * but mostly prose we do

INTERVIEWER: what do you think about that/ the fact that he chooses the poems

STUDENT: well I like his taste so I have to say that I like what we're doing because I like the classics and I respect the classics and I * like them a lot

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that we should encourage you to bring poems song and lyrics to class/

STUDENT: I like the idea a lot because the students choose which poems they would like and would find it better to analyse a poem that they understand and that they actually like in the first place * say you have a poem that you really like and you're analysing it well * you can refer to that poem in the exam and you can use the same techniques to analyse a poem in the exam

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about studying poetry * why do we study poetry/

STUDENT: to understand how the poet constructed and what he was thinking while he was writing the poem and to understand the back story of why he used certain words and imagery and what story he was trying to portray

INTERVIEWER: should we continue studying poetry in this day and age/

STUDENT: yes * it's an appreciation of a form of work of writing that can be considered art sometimes * it takes an effort to write poetry so it has to be appreciated by people who can appreciate it

INTERVIEWER: some people think that we shouldn't continue studying poetry in the age of the internet mobile phones and so on * what do you think about that/

STUDENT: I don't agree because it's like losing a piece of art and replacing it by technology which is not deep at all * so you're losing a piece of history which has been around for long * I mean poetry has been written for a long time and it takes talent and creativeness and imagination to write poetry so

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy studying poetry/

STUDENT: yes I do because sometimes I write poetry and I appreciate the works of other people and the effort that they put into writing certain poems and I appreciate how well they've constructed the structure and how this contributes to the story they're telling

INTERVIEWER: if I say poetry lesson to you what comes to mind/

STUDENT: a poem normally unseen or maybe a poet that has been assigned to you and first reading it to understand the story so reading it to know what the poem is about and afterwards analysing how the poet used language for example or structure to contribute to the story and you really appreciate how the poet wrote it

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you like about your poetry lessons/ let's start with your lectures moving on to your seminars and ending with your tutorials

STUDENT: seminars I enjoy them more probably because you get to focus more on the poem * he gives you time to read the poem to analyse it so you get to understand it by yourself * in the lectures it's good as well because the poems are explained to you line by line so you understand properly * if you don't understand you have the lecturer there to explain it * the lecturer breaks it down word by word so you can understand it better * to get a full understanding of the poem * and in tutorials I like it as well because after you've written the essay on the poem the lecturer can tell you

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you don't like about your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: well in crit seminars there might be some poems which I don't like * for example I might not like the story or the structure of the poem so I get a bit bored of poetry * if I'm not comfortable with the lecturer and how he teaches I might be put off from poetry or from that particular poem so it might be a bit of a disadvantage to have a lecturer whom you don't like in poetry

INTERVIEWER: what do you mean by that/ could you elaborate/

STUDENT: that he never goes deep enough into the story of the poem and he never goes down to depth * so if you're reading and you want a deeper story from the poem and he just says about structure and he doesn't really go into the thoughts I can't really appreciate the poem properly

INTERVIEWER: when you say go into the thoughts what do you mean by that/

STUDENT: to know exactly what the poet was feeling * if he was angry why he was angry at whom he was angry at for example * not just saying like he was contradicting himself * but to explain his emotions in more detail * and even the relationship with our personal life and life in general is important because you get more into the poem if it relates to your life * you start appreciating how there's other people who can feel like you and how the poet manages to portray it in such a way

INTERVIEWER: does this happen during your crit lessons/

STUDENT: sometimes if there is a particular poem which is deep * for example if it's about life or about feelings * then I can relate to it * we do it individually however not as a group

INTERVIEWER: how about the lectures/ is there anything that you don't like about your lectures on Wilfred Owen/

STUDENT: Wilfred Owen I'm OK with it * I just wish that we would go into a bit more depth * for example once we had a replacement teacher and I really saw how a person can go deep into the poem because he had a different teaching method * he talked about Owen's feelings and emotions and thoughts so it wasn't just based on the structure and the language it was more of the thoughts and the context behind the story

INTERVIEWER: without mentioning names what's the difference between these two teachers/

STUDENT: one of them seems to be focused more on the wording of the poem for example and just analysing it as a text * and the other one really tried to personify the poet and tried to make us understand how we can empathise or sympathise with him and the situation * he is more technical whether the other one is more emotional in his approach to poetry

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you don't like about your tutorials on poetry/

STUDENT: no I like them * they're constructive * for example you manage to really see whether you've understood it well when writing your essay and the lecturer guides you along to understand it properly

INTERVIEWER: what do you usually do during your poetry lessons/ let's start with your lectures

STUDENT: we read the poem first * we read it twice sometimes and then we're given notes to understand what the poem is about and then sometimes we read it again so that we can see the literary devices in the poem and then the teacher explains why a word is here why it's used it's rhyme scheme and how it contributes to the way this poem is written and to what it's about

INTERVIEWER: and poetry seminars/

STUDENT: we read the poem and analyse by ourselves in terms of imagery diction and so on * then sometimes he asks us a set of questions about whatever is the main theme in the story or in the poem and we answer depending on what we would have understood

INTERVIEWER: and in a poetry tutorial/

STUDENT: tutorials we don't read the poem again because the teacher assumes that we've read it already since we've written an essay on it and he reads our essays one by one and he tells us where we've gone wrong and what we've done right and he applies it to everyone especially if it's something that can apply to the others' essays

INTERVIEWER: when you say he reads your essays one by one does that mean you read it out and he comments/

STUDENT: we read it out and he has a copy to follow what we're saying * he stops us and tells us you should have done this or you should have avoided this

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy what you usually do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: normally yes because if they're poems which I particularly like from Owen from example then I can enjoy the lessons more

INTERVIEWER: is there anything else that you would you like to do during your poetry lessons/ your lectures seminars and tutorials

STUDENT: well this year I find seminars a bit lacking because we're focusing too much on * how to put it/ we're reading it by ourselves and the focus is on the technical aspect * I don't really like how we're doing it in crit because he doesn't really explain it to us so we just have to read it by ourselves and we waste a lot of time because we lose focus sometimes when there's a lot of noise in class

INTERVIEWER: so if you had to do it differently how would you do it/

STUDENT: I think I would read it all together or maybe make somebody read it but I think it would be better to join the whole class together so that everyone's on the same page not for example one is still in the beginning while another is at the end and sometimes you feel you're running out of time to read it it's more that you have to rush to read it and if somebody's a fast reader the others aren't going to take in the story

INTERVIEWER: when you say read it what would you prefer/ you reading it/ the teacher reading it/ reading it silently/ reading it aloud/

STUDENT: sometimes I like reading it silently because I want to see whether I can understand it on my own but if we're in a class I tend to get distracted so if the teacher read it it would be better

INTERVIEWER: and how about you reading it/ a student reading it aloud/

STUDENT: that sometimes happens * it's OK but I would prefer it if the student is fluent in English so it would give more flow to the story so it would make it easier to hear and internalise

INTERVIEWER: what are you gaining out of your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: you understand more how there are different structures of poems * you sometimes learn things from the poems depending on the content * mostly that and sometimes even if you write poetry yourself you can learn some tips from other poets about how they write it

INTERVIEWER: have your poetry lessons at Junior College encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure/

STUDENT: well I already used to read a lot before poetry lectures so it really just maintained my interest in poetry

INTERVIEWER: will you continue reading poetry in the future/

STUDENT: yes I will

INTERVIEWER: will it be thanks to your lessons or doesn't it have any bearing on it/

STUDENT: it doesn't really have a bearing on it because I already used to read it before

INTERVIEWER: do your poetry teachers read poetry/

STUDENT: I think so yes * definitely my crit teacher * he reads a lot of poetry and novels and I'm assuming that he appreciates the classics and other forms of poetry

INTERVIEWER: how do you know this/

STUDENT: because sometimes he refers to other poems during a lesson * for example he says this is similar to another poem I've read and then he tries to compare

INTERVIEWER: how about your other poetry teachers/

STUDENT: I don't know about the others but I guess they do no/

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that your poetry teachers should share what they're reading with you/

STUDENT: I think it's important because you can apply that to what you're doing * even for example if you take an interest in the poems they mention and you get understand what they're talking about * it's important for the students * and to know that their teacher does actually read poetry * he really knows what he's talking about

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing poetry * have you ever written any poetry/

527

STUDENT: yes

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because I thought that it would be interesting to see how you can express your opinion and feelings into that form of poetry * I like the way that you can structure it in a certain way and it presents itself in a different way from a story

INTERVIEWER: do you still write poetry/

STUDENT: sometimes I do * I kind of lost my mojo * the last one I wrote was for our graduation at secondary * I enjoyed writing that

INTERVIEWER: how long have you been writing poetry/

STUDENT: I think since I was a child * obviously the poems I wrote as a child weren't good at all but still I enjoyed the fact that I could write poetry in the way I used to write it

INTERVIEWER: will you continue writing poetry/

STUDENT: if I get the inspiration yes obviously * I mean I know I will always enjoy the opportunity of writing poetry

INTERVIEWER: have you ever written any song lyrics/

STUDENT: I think maybe once or twice I tried song lyrics * I wouldn't think that they're so different from poetry * it's just that the structure is less tight

INTERVIEWER: why did you do it/

STUDENT: because I wanted to see if I could apply a melody to it * for it to sound different but I'm not really a musician so it didn't really work out after all

INTERVIEWER: would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

STUDENT: I think it would help because you're applying everything you've learnt in crit and poetry and you can apply for example devices metaphors and you can learn for example how to structure it * you can see first hand how a poet applies emotions into their writing * so it would help even to write an essay and to analyse unseen poems because you'd understand first hand how the poet would write it

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing about poetry * what have your teachers told you to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: they tell us to analyse what is the main theme what is the main concern and they ask us to analyse the language why he would use certain words and literary devices

INTERVIEWER: and what have they told you to do when writing an essay on an unseen poem/

STUDENT: they tell us to read the poem several times so that we understand it properly * because if you've never seen it before you have to familiarise yourself with the poem * and then they ask us to investigate different aspects of the poem * for example first imagery and how that contributes and then the language and structures so you really understand how this poem is constructed

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to read you a definition and then I'm going to ask you a question about it * personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry/

STUDENT: I don't * I try to remain objective because sometimes if you're subjective you might go off track or you might not understand the poem because you might focus more on what you think than on what the poet is trying to portray in his own poem * you might have different opinions so if you don't agree with his opinion you might end up writing an essay which is just opposing his opinion rather than what he wanted to express

INTERVIEWER: and what do your teachers tell you to do when it comes to personal response/

STUDENT: they tell us that you have to remain objective and that the essay is not actually about your opinion but about what the poet is saying

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: [silent reading of poem] well here it's like it's expressing that you want the poem to go a certain way but it went into a rather negative way * you're trying to force a story out of it in a way that you wouldn't appreciate the poem as it is * sometimes it does happen for example in Wilfred Owen sometimes if there's a poem that you are really trying to squeeze out meaning and you really trying to get to grips with the language and diction * as if you're disregarding the story of the poem

INTERVIEWER: do you feel that students tie a poem to a chair and torture a confession out of it/

STUDENT: sometimes * if there are people who don't like poetry they're going to be constantly reading it in bits and trying to find a meaning in it and they mess up their whole understanding of the poem

INTERVIEWER: and why do they do that/

STUDENT: either because they don't like poetry or because they don't like the poem itself or sometimes they might not even like the fact that they have to write an essay about the poem * they would rather just appreciate it by reading it

INTERVIEWER: do your teachers adopt the attitude of the speaker in the poem/

STUDENT: ** sometimes our crit teacher gives us some background about the poet and he tells us good criticism about it for example * teachers usually go for the meaning so that we can understand what it's all about * they appreciate how it is structurewise dictionwise and you can really see how the poet uses the form

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to show you a video and I'd like you to tell me more about this

STUDENT: [watches video] I think it's a good use of imagery and you can picture exactly what he wants to say even with the hands * it's as if you try to appreciate it in all forms but then when you try to analyse it you wash away the poem * the real way in which you should appreciate it and the real beauty of the poem is lost when you go about it the wrong way

INTERVIEWER: is this your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: sometimes * sometimes when he goes about it in a way in which I can't really appreciate it the poem loses its beauty so sometimes I don't appreciate its beauty even if its beautiful * if he goes about it the wrong way then I don't really like the poem

INTERVIEWER: what do you mean by go about it the wrong way/ who goes about it the wrong way/

STUDENT: it could be me who goes about it the wrong way * either because I haven't understood it well or sometimes I just don't like the flow so I disregard the poem completely * but if the teacher for example just focuses on the surface of the poem and does not really go into the depth or he tries to force out a meaning when it's found somewhere else for example it puts me off the poem itself ** the thought of the exam puts on pressure on needing to understand the poem too but you can't let it become like you're reading poetry like you're on a stopwatch and you're out of

time * you have to calm down and appreciate it otherwise if you just rush through it you won't really understand it and it won't help you at all

INTERVIEWER: thanks a lot for participating in this interview

Appendix 39 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Student M

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * which lessons do you like most out of your entire English course/

STUDENT: *Handmaid's Tale*

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because I find it easier to write essays about * I mean it's not really a boring book * I don't know * the story's nice and I enjoy it * I prefer it to the other ones

INTERVIEWER: how about poetry/

STUDENT: no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: I'm not into poetry * at all * for example in Owen the concept of war just depresses me

INTERVIEWER: and the literary crit seminars on poetry/

STUDENT: crit is my weak point * I'm not so good at it * I feel I'm better at prose rather than poetry * I find it easier to speak about the subject in a prose passage than in a poem

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: poems to me are very ambiguous * it's like it's very subjective how you approach a poem * I can look at it one way and you can look at it another way * in prose there's more text and you can understand it more rather than a poem * I don't really know how to explain the whole idea of it

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

STUDENT: reading books

INTERVIEWER: such as/

STUDENT: John Green * I forget the titles but reading books * adventure novels * I can't remember the names

INTERVIEWER: what do you understand by the term poetry/

STUDENT: expression * someone expressing their feelings ** it's a medium through which they can explain what they're feeling at that point in time

INTERVIEWER: would you consider song lyrics to be poetry/

STUDENT: no not really * it's a cliché everyone's speaking about love * I don't really consider that to be poetry

INTERVIEWER: are there any musicians or bands whose lyrics you particularly enjoy/

STUDENT: John Mayer

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: ** the things he writes about * they're things most teenagers can relate to

INTERVIEWER: and his lyrics are they poetry to you/

STUDENT: no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: no * they're just normal love songs

INTERVIEWER: in your mind there seems to be a clear distinction between

STUDENT: music and poetry

INTERVIEWER: and what's the difference in your opinion/

STUDENT: ** at the end of the day they're both sort of art and expression of feeling but to me poetry * I have this idea in my head that it has to rhyme * you have to have rhythm * it's something we do at school * I don't see lyrics as poetry

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading or listening to poetry/

STUDENT: no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: I find it boring

INTERVIEWER: any particular reason why/

STUDENT: ** I don't know * I just don't enjoy reading it * it frustrates me [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: do you read poetry for personal pleasure or for study purposes/

STUDENT: I have to study poetry but I don't enjoy reading it

INTERVIEWER: not even the ones you do at school/

STUDENT: only certain poems * out of all the ones we do both in Owen and crit it is rare that I enjoy any of them * when they're easy to tackle I do enjoy them because I enjoy it when I understand what's it all about but if I don't understand anything it frustrates me even more

INTERVIEWER: are there any poets whom you enjoy reading/

STUDENT: no [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: do you like all or any of Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: a couple of them

INTERVIEWER: which ones/

STUDENT: 'S.I.W.' just brings out sort of how the people at home push * it's all about the propaganda so that is very clear * 'Dulce Decorum Est' brings out the horrors of war * I like that as well * and 'Disabled' because it's about mutilation and death the visible consequences of war * and they're all different * 'Disabled' is about the physical * 'S.I.W.' is about the emotional and sort of 'Dulce Decorum Est' is that combination of both so it sort of brings out everything and those are the ones I enjoy the most

INTERVIEWER: how about the poems that you read for your literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: we mostly tackle prose passages * and when we do poetry he explains the rhyme iambic pentameter and all that stuff so not much to enjoy is there/ * I prefer prose passages

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because I find it easier to bring out the subject in an essay

INTERVIEWER: how about the poems that you're assigned for your tutorials/

STUDENT: lately we had one on love * 'Variations on the Word Love' * it was quite easy to understand and to relate to and I did enjoy that

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: the teacher

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about that/

STUDENT: I think it's very subjective * it doesn't really match that of the examiner you know * he can choose one particular poem and someone else the examiner can choose something else

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that students might be given the opportunity of bringing song lyrics and poems into class/

STUDENT: it's a very good idea

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because like that everyone has his own say and we can all learn from each other and there's a wider variety to choose from and to learn stuff from rather than just one thing

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about studying poetry * why do we study poetry/

STUDENT: because we have to in this case * we're forced to in a way

INTERVIEWER: some people say that we should no longer study poetry * what do you think about that/

STUDENT: I don't think we should be obliged to study poetry * it should be out of our own free will * because it being something that we have to sit for pushes someone back I feel

INTERVIEWER: so should we continue studying poetry in this day and age/

STUDENT: no!

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy studying poetry/

STUDENT: no

INTERVIEWER: could you give me a reason/

STUDENT: it's not something I enjoy doing * I'd rather be studying something else something I find interesting

INTERVIEWER: if I say poetry lesson to you what comes to mind/

STUDENT: it's boring [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you like about your poetry lessons/ let's start with your lectures then seminars and tutorials

STUDENT: I like my Wilfred Owen lecturer * he teaches right so that makes it easier for me to learn how to approach poems * in tutorials we just tackle poems we have to write about and he teaches us how to bring out sort of diction imagery and so on * but at the end of the day it doesn't really affect me

INTERVIEWER: and your seminars/

STUDENT: we analyse poems and as I said when they're difficult I feel frustrated

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you don't like about your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: in the seminars I wish we would go into more depth and not only speak about prose passages but also about poems and I know that it's important to know how to identify iambic pentameter and everything else but I'd like if we could learn how to write an introduction * how to introduce a poem and what to bring out and how to conclude our essays

INTERVIEWER: what do you usually do during your poetry lessons/ starting with your lectures on Wilfred Owen

STUDENT: first of all we read the poem and then we start tackling it line by line and bringing out the images and all the tools used by Owen to bring out the effects of war * what he really meant by it and the background of it and we just pick on the important points * the lecturer speaks about it and if have any questions we would ask

INTERVIEWER: and what happens during a literary criticism seminar on poetry/

STUDENT: * first we have to read it and then he asks us what we understand by it and what the theme is and we try to bring it out and if we get it wrong he explains to us how to identify what the theme is and points out what the images are and how we can refer to them

INTERVIEWER: and during a tutorial on poetry/

STUDENT: he gives a brief explanation about the poem and then we start reading our essays one by one and if there's something wrong he stops us and corrects it explains it to us properly how he sees it * and how we could have arranged our essay better

INTERVIEWER: do you usually enjoy what you do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: no not really

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: ** because I don't really like poetry

INTERVIEWER: is there anything else that you would you like to do during your poetry lessons/ for example your lectures on Wilfred Owen seminars and tutorials on poetry

STUDENT: no not really * more discussions perhaps but I'm satisfied on the whole

INTERVIEWER: what are you gaining out of your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: gaining more knowledge about the time when Wilfred Owen lived and how people pushed them to join war and how they didn't really understand war * mostly knowledge about back then

INTERVIEWER: what are you gaining out of your seminars on poetry/

STUDENT: how to tackle poems * how to identify the imagery and diction and just how to point it out

INTERVIEWER: and out of your tutorials/

STUDENT: how to write an essay and what we could have done better

INTERVIEWER: have your poetry lessons at Junior College encouraged you to read more poetry for pleasure/

STUDENT: no!

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: because I'm not interested in it

INTERVIEWER: do your teachers read poetry/

STUDENT: yes they do!

INTERVIEWER: how do you know/

STUDENT: our crit lecturer I'm sure he reads poetry because he reads a lot of books and he knows his stuff his background * even about certain poets * he's always mentioning what he reads

INTERVIEWER: how about your Wilfred Owen and tutorial teachers/

STUDENT: I don't know * I've never heard them mentioning anything

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that your poetry teachers should share what they're reading with you/

STUDENT: I think it sort of encourages the students * sort of * and to have more confidence and to know what they're doing * having someone teaching you who has read a lot of poetry * who understands it it's sort of encouraging * you can trust the person

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about writing poetry * have you ever written any poetry/

STUDENT: no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: because I'm not interested in it [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: have you ever written any song lyrics/

STUDENT: no neither * actually yes * I don't actually write them down but I do come up with them * sort of in my brain

INTERVIEWER: do you memorise them/

STUDENT: sort of

INTERVIEWER: and why does that happen/

STUDENT: when I'm playing guitar * I improvise ** I try to find words for the music

INTERVIEWER: and why don't you write them down/

STUDENT: because I'm not really interested in having a solid song there * it's sort of something fun for me

INTERVIEWER: would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

STUDENT: no it would make things even worse

INTERVIEWER: meaning/

STUDENT: ** I'm already not interested in studying poetry let alone writing my own

INTERVIEWER: how do you think your classmates would feel about the idea/

STUDENT: I think they'd agree with me

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: the exceptions would enjoy doing it but I think the majority of us wouldn't enjoy it

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing about poetry * what have your teachers told you to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: we shouldn't just write about that specific poem * sort of generalise it and give an idea of other poems * like references to other poems

INTERVIEWER: and what have your teachers told you to do when writing an essay on an unseen poem/

STUDENT: that if we're pointing out something * if we're concluding something ourselves we should give examples from the text * we shouldn't just invent stuff * we need a proper explanation for what we say

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to read you a definition and then I'm going to ask you a question * personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry/

STUDENT: mostly in the conclusion

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: I express my feelings and what I feel about the poem and what I understood

INTERVIEWER: and why in the conclusion/

STUDENT: ** sort of in the essay I explain what the poem is about and at the end I explain what I feel and what I think about it * I remember once they told us that in an essay we should write about our personal response in the conclusion * we should give our own ideas so sort of I've always done that * I feel that if we believe in

something * if something stands out to us in a poem we should mention it * in the body you have to give examples though to prove your point

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: [silent reading of poem] I think I do agree with it

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because a poet wants his readers to understand it and understand his feelings and give it a chance but at the end he says but all they do is tie the poem to a chair with a rope and torture a confession out of it * he's saying that we don't enjoy doing it but we're forced to do it we have to try to find the reason behind the poet's feelings * it's sort of like we're obliged to find an answer behind it * we don't enjoy doing it but we're forced to

INTERVIEWER: and why does this happen/

STUDENT: it depends * if someone's not interested in poetry but they're given a poem to analyse it's their only way out sort of * so you can only force yourself to do it

INTERVIEWER: do your teachers adopt the attitude of the person speaking in this poem/

STUDENT: no * we just sit down * we read the poem and he talks about it * he doesn't tell us to approach it with an open mind or anything like that * nothing's ever mentioned

INTERVIEWER: do students torture a confession out of a poem/

STUDENT: yes very much so

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: * every sentence in the poem you have to find a meaning behind it so you can build a 500 word essay * to just fill it up sort of

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to show you a video and I'd like you to tell me a bit more about that

STUDENT: [watches video] I think it's more effective seeing a video about it

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: what he's saying about holding it up to the light * it explains it to us rather than just reading it out * it's visual and we can relate to it more

INTERVIEWER: does this ever happen/

STUDENT: no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: we've never watched videos * I'd love it

INTERVIEWER: would it change anything/

STUDENT: I might probably get to enjoy poetry more * rather than having it written down in front of us we can see it * when it comes to novels I'd rather read a book than watch a film but poetry * I personally if I find it boring I'd rather watch it than read it

INTERVIEWER: does the video still describe your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: yes

INTERVIEWER: in what way/

STUDENT: I still try to squeeze out the answer

INTERVIEWER: thanks a lot for participating in this interview

Appendix 40 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Student N

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * which lessons do you like most out of your entire English course/

STUDENT: ** *Othello*

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: * I like Shakespeare's work * it's very interesting and I enjoyed *Macbeth* when I was doing my O-levels so it's like we're building on that

INTERVIEWER: any other component from the syllabus that you like/

STUDENT: linguistics is quite interesting

INTERVIEWER: why do you find it interesting/

STUDENT: ** the fact how a sentence is broken down into pieces I never actually knew how to do that * I didn't how to break down sentences in that way

INTERVIEWER: and how about poetry/

STUDENT: it's interesting * Wilfred Owen's poems especially * they get to you

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

STUDENT: fiction * novels crime thrillers especially

INTERVIEWER: any favourite authors/

STUDENT: right now Karen Rose * I really like her work

INTERVIEWER: why do you like her work/

STUDENT: how she describes the crime scene * the imagery is very real * I like it

INTERVIEWER: what do you understand by the term poetry/

STUDENT: ** a structure of words written from the thoughts of the poet to reflect his thoughts or maybe send out a message * sometimes they rhyme

INTERVIEWER: would you consider song lyrics to be poetry/

STUDENT: not really

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: it depends on the song * if it's a ballad maybe it could be described as poetry but modern songs of today I don't see them as poetry

INTERVIEWER: are there any musicians or bands whose lyrics you particularly enjoy/

STUDENT: 30 Seconds to Mars the language they use is really good

INTERVIEWER: would you consider their lyrics to be poetry or no/

STUDENT: not exactly poetry

INTERVIEWER: so for you what's the difference between poetry and song lyrics/

STUDENT: ** maybe because when I hear a song I don't think of it as a poem * it's not like the poems we do here at school

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading lyrics/

STUDENT: I rarely read lyrics * unless I don't understand a part of a song and I want to clarify it

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading or listening to poetry/

STUDENT: reading more than listening

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: it's better if you know what you're reading * if you hear it maybe it just passes through your head and you don't know its structure and how it's written * I think it's better to read it in order to grasp the true meaning of it

INTERVIEWER: do you read poetry for personal pleasure or for study purposes/

STUDENT: study purposes

INTERVIEWER: can you name any poets whose work you particularly enjoy reading/

STUDENT: ** the ones we do at school * Wilfred Owen really

INTERVIEWER: let's talk about choice of poems * do you like all or any of Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: most of them

INTERVIEWER: do you have any favourites/

STUDENT: 'Disabled' is one of my favourites

INTERVIEWER: why do you like it/

STUDENT: how Wilfred Owen describes the boy and how he threw his knees away is very moving * you feel how the soldiers experienced war * how they were exploited by the propaganda * from a hero he came back amputated

INTERVIEWER: are there any Owen poems that you don't like/

STUDENT: *** the religious ones * I don't really like them

INTERVIEWER: why don't you like them/

STUDENT: I don't know * I just don't like them

INTERVIEWER: how about the poems that you read for your literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: they're OK * most of them are OK

INTERVIEWER: for which reason do you find them OK/

STUDENT: I don't know how they choose the poems for crit but they seem OK

INTERVIEWER: how about the poems that you're assigned for your tutorials/ for example recently you had 'Variations on the Word Love'

STUDENT: yes that was nice * how she says that word love can be used in different ways * and then she refers to her partner * it's something I can relate to I guess * the subject is nice * it's soppy but I like it

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: the teacher

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about that/

STUDENT: I guess his expertise is better * but we should I think be given a chance for us to maybe suggest a poem

INTERVIEWER: that's my next question actually * what do you think of the idea that you should be given the opportunity of bringing song lyrics and poems into class/

STUDENT: I agree

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: * I think maybe even if you find a poem it's something you like and can relate to * the teachers I don't know how they choose the poems * students I think would know better because they know what their difficulties are * I think we would probably enjoy poetry more if we're given a chance of choosing poems and lyrics ourselves

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about studying poetry * why do we study poetry/

STUDENT: ** [laughs] * partly because it's on the syllabus * maybe to get an insight into other types of writing techniques apart from novels

INTERVIEWER: some people believe that we shouldn't study poetry in this day and age * what do you think about that/

STUDENT: ** I think not that much detail should be given * like Wilfred Owen * we don't need to do so many poems by Owen * some poems and then focus on other subjects in English

INTERVIEWER: do you feel that we should continue studying poetry in this day and age/

STUDENT: yes but not that much focus

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy studying poetry/

STUDENT: to read a poem I don't mind but to do a whole critical essay on it I don't really like that

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: I find myself a bit weak in crit to be honest * maybe it's because I don't have that much training I guess * I don't know * I find it difficult to analyse a poem

INTERVIEWER: if I say poetry lesson to you what comes to mind/

STUDENT: the teacher chooses a poem analyses it then maybe writes a few sentences on it and we are sometimes given an essay to do about it

INTERVIEWER: is there anything that you like about your poetry lessons/ let's start with your lectures moving on the seminars and tutorials

STUDENT: Wilfred Owen the teacher goes into great detail so you get the story and the way she explained it was interesting

INTERVIEWER: and poetry seminars/

STUDENT: ** considering they're at eight in the morning * I don't really enjoy the seminars * I find crit hard

INTERVIEWER: and how about your tutorials/ is there anything that you like about them

STUDENT: not really

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you don't like about your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: the seminars I find it pointless to give out a poem explain it and they just analyse the poem * they don't give you a model of how you should write about it * I think that's why I find it difficult to write in crit * because just analysing the poem won't get you anywhere

INTERVIEWER: and how about your tutorials/ why don't you like them/

STUDENT: tutorials ** I think from my personal experience the lecturers I have they criticise a lot * they criticise my writing * no matter what I write and I try my best they always have something to say * and the fact you have to read the whole essay in front of the others I hate it

INTERVIEWER: why don't you like it/

STUDENT: I just don't * you read a sentence and they stop you * they say that should be that * that's not correct * I would have done it this way * it's not relevant to the title * I don't think tutorials should be like that

INTERVIEWER: how should they be/ how would you actually conduct a tutorial/

STUDENT: a tutorial I think * first talk about the tutorial assignment * what should have been done and maybe analyse the poem and then give feedback the week after on the essays in general but not specifically on one essay * not asking you to read it and everyone knows your mistakes * I don't like that * it's embarrassing * and there are sometimes preferences like there's someone who writes really brilliantly and the teacher is all this is good good * and then you come and your work is criticised * I feel even more dispirited afterwards * sometimes I'm on the verge of giving up actually

INTERVIEWER: what do you usually do during your poetry lessons/ for example your lectures on Wilfred Owen

STUDENT: we just go through the poems one by one and in a particular lesson she reads the poem and then first she gives us a general background on what happened and about the poem in general and then she goes line by line through the poem in detail

INTERVIEWER: are the students ever asked to read the poem/

STUDENT: no

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about that/

STUDENT: ** she could ask sometimes * I wouldn't mind that much

INTERVIEWER: what happens during a literary criticism seminar on poetry/

STUDENT: the teacher gives out the poem she reads it and we analyse it

INTERVIEWER: and when you say analyse it what does that mean/

STUDENT: she talks about it * sometimes line by line

INTERVIEWER: and what do you do/ that is the students what do they do/

STUDENT: [laughs] don't know * pretend to listen perhaps * sometimes she asks us what we think about a particular line but mostly the teacher talks about it * there isn't a lot of participation

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: maybe it's because we don't know the poem's meaning * we wouldn't know what to say

INTERVIEWER: how about tutorials/ you've already described some of the things that happen during a tutorial but is there anything else that goes on/

STUDENT: first he gives out the essay of the previous week with the mark * then we start reading the essays one by one * he stops to explain what we could have done better and that's it * I don't really like this system

INTERVIEWER: do you usually enjoy what you do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: if they had to make some changes I wouldn't mind

INTERVIEWER: is there anything else that you would you like to do during your poetry lessons/ for example your lectures on Wilfred Owen

STUDENT: ** I think it's fine as it is because we stick to the syllabus

INTERVIEWER: how about your literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: *** more discussions perhaps * and sharing our own choices * I would also like less analysing and more writing because in the exam that's what we'll be doing * analyse a bit and then a lot of writing * we rarely write anything during the seminars and that's why I find it so difficult to write essays * there isn't enough practice

INTERVIEWER: and tutorials/

STUDENT: not so much criticism of our essays and less tutorials * not once a week perhaps

INTERVIEWER: wouldn't your writing suffer in that way/

STUDENT: yes but perhaps we could have more feedback sessions

INTERVIEWER: what are you gaining out of your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: I don't know ** Wilfred Owen I think I got a better insight on the First World War * the seminars not that much and not even tutorials * I think the Owen lectures were the most helpful * they gave me more knowledge on poetry

INTERVIEWER: have your poetry lessons at Junior College encouraged you to read more poetry for pleasure/

STUDENT: not really

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: I think I only read the poems I need to study * I don't like reading poetry for pleasure * I don't really understand poetry

INTERVIEWER: do your poetry teachers read poetry/

STUDENT: how would I know/ [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: have they ever mentioned the poetry that they're reading/

STUDENT: not really

INTERVIEWER: none of them/

STUDENT: the Owen lecturer definitely not * crit sometimes * this is my favourite poet and his work is similar to this poet * and the tutorial lecturer no

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that your poetry teachers should share what they're reading with you/

STUDENT: I think it would be helpful * maybe even if we don't know so much about different poets * by knowing what they read then maybe we could look them up

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing poetry * have you ever written any poetry/

STUDENT: [laughs] when I was in primary probably * our teacher asked us to write something but I haven't since then

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: I just don't get the muse [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: will you write poetry in the future/

STUDENT: I don't think so * maybe a short story but not poetry

INTERVIEWER: how about song lyrics/ have you ever written any song lyrics/

STUDENT: no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: I don't play any instruments so it would be hopeless for me to even try

INTERVIEWER: would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

STUDENT: no no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: not that it would be pointless but I think it's too much

INTERVIEWER: in what sense/

STUDENT: I mean if you do it too often * maybe once or twice a year is OK but not too much * not everyone would like it so perhaps pairing people who are good at it with those who don't like writing poetry

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing about poetry * what have your teachers told you to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: they've never really told us how to write an Owen essay but what I usually do is write an introduction about Owen's poetry in general and then if for

example the essay is on religion I would write about different poems that have to do with that

INTERVIEWER: and what have your teachers told you to do when writing an essay on an unseen poem/

STUDENT: ** to write about structure imagery diction and go into the poem by looking at these things

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to read you a definition and then I'm going to ask you a question * personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry/

STUDENT: no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: ** it's a bit risky I think

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: in the exam it's risky because it might appear biased * I know it's not supposed to be like that but the examiners would feel prejudiced

INTERVIEWER: why would they/

STUDENT: it shouldn't be like that because if you're writing your own opinion it should be valued * but examiners might judge you because they don't agree with your opinion

INTERVIEWER: what do your teachers tell you to do when it comes to your personal opinion/

STUDENT: * they prefer us to write what other critics write about that poem and they tell us not to include our personal opinion * they tell us not to make the essay too personal

INTERVIEWER: have you ever included your personal response in an essay on poetry/

STUDENT: I don't think so * only in the conclusion perhaps

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: [silent reading of poem] we do behave like that in a way I guess * we try to get meaning at all costs * and we put too much effort into it

INTERVIEWER: why do you do so/

STUDENT: because poetry is sometimes difficult to understand and unless you do that you won't get it * I know that we shouldn't read it in that way but I guess most of us do

INTERVIEWER: do your teachers adopt the attitude of the person speaking in this poem/

STUDENT: not really * they analyse it in the same way we do * we imitate them in a way I guess

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to show you a video and I'd like you to tell me a bit more about that

STUDENT: [watches video] our crit lessons are boring sometimes * the teacher analyses the poem so you could say that we torture it in class

INTERVIEWER: how do you feel about the video/

STUDENT: I think I understood it better after watching it

INTERVIEWER: have you ever been shown videos of poems during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: no

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think of that/

STUDENT: * it could help a bit better I think

INTERVIEWER: help with what/

STUDENT: maybe what the poem's about * it's inspiring too * it might help us appreciate poetry I don't know

INTERVIEWER: thanks a lot for participating in this interview

Appendix 41 – Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Student O

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this interview * even though I shall be recording this interview please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course * which lessons do you like most out of your entire English course/

STUDENT: Owen * I'm enjoying *Handmaid's* and also *Othello* ** I think I enjoy *Othello* the most because I've been to London with the school and I saw the play and went to the workshops at the Globe and I'm very familiar with Shakespeare so I enjoy it a lot

INTERVIEWER: why do you like these three components in particular/

STUDENT: *Othello* because I like these types of stories * Owen because with the school I visited the Somme and that was really interesting * and *Handmaid's* is a really interesting story which is relevant to what's happening nowadays

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

STUDENT: personal pleasure I personally like mostly narrative and * can I say what I don't like/ * I don't like reading biographies personally or tacky stories * those kind of boring stuff * I like reading narrative mostly * fiction I guess

INTERVIEWER: do you have any favourite authors/

STUDENT: right now I'm reading *One Day* by David Nicholls * I like all his books actually * he's my favourite right now * at the moment * I'd like to watch the movie too but usually I always read the book first

INTERVIEWER: what do you understand by the term poetry/

STUDENT: poetry/ * poetry ** in the past I didn't use to appreciate it a lot but now * for me it's a creative piece of writing where a person manages to intertwine words to create a sort of story or pattern which is very very intelligent * I personally wouldn't be able to do it but I can appreciate it

INTERVIEWER: do you consider song lyrics to be poetry/

STUDENT: so and so perhaps * not as effective maybe

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: because sometimes * according to the song because some songs are very repetitive and that wouldn't really be poetry for me * perhaps if you have certain

words being used and even the way the words are placed and how the sound is connected to the words then yes it can be considered as a kind of poetry * but then a poem is sometimes different from a song

INTERVIEWER: are there any musicians or bands whose lyrics you particularly enjoy/

STUDENT: yes I used to enjoy a lot * Muse and The Wanted * Maroon Five * their lyrics are really beautiful * they have a type of way * their songs have interesting use of vocab

INTERVIEWER: would you consider their lyrics to be poetry/

STUDENT: I think it is poetry because poetry is a piece of text which makes you reflect and think about it * even the words used are most times different from the words you hear everyday * so yes it's very intelligent

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading or listening to poetry/

STUDENT: I prefer reading it

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because I can analyse it myself rather than depending on someone else

INTERVIEWER: and when you listen to poetry is the experience different in your mind/

STUDENT: yes because when I see it I can actually see how the structure is and where it starts and where it ends * when I hear it I might forget what comes after * I prefer having the text in front of me * I can have the text in front of me and hear it at the same time because I'm seeing it * that's OK because I'm reading it in my mind but at the same time I'm listening to it * even when I'm listening to a song I like having the lyrics in front of me because I can understand it better

INTERVIEWER: do you read poetry for personal pleasure or for study purposes/

STUDENT: I do it for study purposes but that's only because I don't have time * if I had time I would read poetry for pleasure yes

INTERVIEWER: can you name any poets whose work you particularly enjoy reading/

STUDENT: not really because I don't read a lot of poetry

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about choice of poems * do you like all or any of Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: actually I like all his poems because he has a type of style of writing which is quite appealing * he knows how to create emotions by means of his style of writing

INTERVIEWER: do you have any favourite poems/

STUDENT: I love 'Disabled' * that's really good *** 'The Show' too because it's the kind of thing I wouldn't ever have thought about * he actually imagined the trenches as a face * even 'Dulce Decorum' * it's quite dramatic

INTERVIEWER: are there any Owen poems that you don't like/

STUDENT: ** 'Le Christianisme' for example

INTERVIEWER: why don't you like it/

STUDENT: for one it's too short * and it's kind of bleak * there's isn't much to know about it * there isn't much to say and learn

INTERVIEWER: how about the poems that you read for your literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: no I actually like them * the ones we've had so far were OK

INTERVIEWER: why do you like them/

STUDENT: their subjects are interesting

INTERVIEWER: how about the poems that you're assigned for your tutorials/ for example recently you had 'Variations on the Word Love' * did you like that/

STUDENT: that was lovely * I really enjoyed that * it was hard to write about very hard * I find sometimes that when you have a beautiful poem * you understand what's happening but then when it comes to writing about it it's really hard

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: for example it was about the common love and the deep emotional love * but then I don't know when it actually came to write about it it's something so abstract love * sometimes the more abstract it is the harder it is to write about

INTERVIEWER: is it the kind of poem that you would read on your own/

STUDENT: probably yes * I enjoyed it a lot * I think I read it about six times

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for your literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: how should I know/ [laughs] * our teacher I would imagine

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about that/

STUDENT: no I think it's good because I wouldn't know which ones to choose

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that you should be given the opportunity of bringing song lyrics and poems to class/

STUDENT: ah yes that would be OK because then you would have done the research * if the teacher gives you a poem you have to read it but if it's something that you found it's different * because imagine if you're given a poem and you don't like it but you have to do it * it's something which you have to do so then it becomes like a duty * but then if you find it yourself it's something which you enjoy doing so it's a duty but you actually like it as well

INTERVIEWER: has that ever happened/

STUDENT: no it's never actually happened * it's always the teacher who chooses

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about studying poetry * why do we study poetry/

STUDENT: why/ [laughs] ** poetry is a way by which a person puts his thoughts and feelings into words which for me is super intelligent * I admire all poets who manage to create such work because I wouldn't manage

INTERVIEWER: some people believe that we should no longer study poetry * what do you think about that/

STUDENT: no I disagree * I strongly disagree with that * because before even in secondary we had poetry as unseen texts and I never used to appreciate a poem but now that I actually have to analyse a poem * I have to write about a poem I'm appreciating poetry so much more that if I had time maybe after my A-levels maybe I would go find books and read poetry

INTERVIEWER: so should we continue studying poetry in this day and age/

STUDENT: definitely! because personally I think we should stick to classic stuff like poetry * someone else might disagree but I feel it's important

INTERVIEWER: what do you mean by classic/

STUDENT: as in books not technology

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy studying poetry/

STUDENT: yes I enjoy it

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because it's giving me more of a sense of an artistic mind to write about things * even with writing it helps

INTERVIEWER: if I say poetry lesson to you what comes to mind/

STUDENT: ** experiencing a poem and enjoying it

INTERVIEWER: is there anything that you like about your poetry lessons/ starting with your lectures moving on the seminars and your tutorials

STUDENT: Wilfred Owen was very very interesting * we had [teacher's name] and he conducted the lesson in an interesting way * at first we used to read the poem and then analyse it then write about it

INTERVIEWER: and seminars/

STUDENT: * we don't do much poetry during crit but we do poetry * I'd like to have more * last year we did things like the iambic pentameter and so on * there's so much that goes into a poem * I always enjoy the poetry

INTERVIEWER: and how about your tutorials/ is there anything that you enjoy about your poetry tutorials/

STUDENT: my tutorials I enjoy because I actually write the essay on my own * because in crit we actually do it in class which is good because I actually get more ideas but I enjoy tutorials because I read the poem on my own I analyse it on my own I do the essay on my own with my own ideas and then when I come to actually talk about it in tutorials I get to know different points of view but I wouldn't have been influenced by another person so it's good in a way

INTERVIEWER: is there anything you don't like about your poetry lessons/ lectures seminars and tutorials

STUDENT: no I think I don't mind * there's isn't much to say * I think mostly crit this year which I'm a bit not that happy with * last year was better because we used to actually study how the poetry is written * metre and so on * this year we're just analysing in a way but we're writing more * OK it has to be done but I think last year was more interesting more of a learning process * now it's just about working which is good because we have the exams which are coming up but I think there is so much more to learn

INTERVIEWER: to be clear about this what's the difference between last year and this year/

STUDENT: last year was more of a learning process * learning more what the poem contains how it's made how it's structured * why the poet wrote it this way and not some other way * it was more interesting * a psychological kind of thing * this year it's just reading the poem maybe analysing it once or twice and writing some notes about it * I'd rather learn than working all the time * in class it's good to do both things

INTERVIEWER: what do you usually do during your poetry lessons/ starting with your lectures

STUDENT: I think I mentioned that one * we used to first read the poem

INTERVIEWER: who reads/

STUDENT: the teacher

INTERVIEWER: were the students ever asked to read/

STUDENT: it could be but it was usually the teacher who read it * once the teacher asked a number of us to read different lines from 'Dulce' and we did all dramatic 'Gas! Gas! Quick boys' * it was really fun and it sticks to your head * that's good

INTERVIEWER: what happens during a literary criticism seminar on poetry/

STUDENT: the lesson which I mentioned before * we're given a poem we read it and discuss it and write something about it * we write something about it but usually we stick one particular thing like diction and we analyse that

INTERVIEWER: and during a tutorial on poetry/

STUDENT: tutorial as well same as I've said * we analyse it at home we write about it * then we come to class and our teacher he likes to get one of us to read his or her essay and while you're reading he stops you and tells you what you did wrong what you could have done and what you could have added

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about that/

STUDENT: it's good because you learn a lot from other people's work hearing what they say and other people's points of view * because sometimes you don't come up with the same things * it's distracting sometimes because it's not your own work but it's OK

INTERVIEWER: do you ever feel embarrassed or shy whilst reading your work/

STUDENT: no not at all * if I know it's bad then yes but so far I've been quite confident

INTERVIEWER: is there anything else that you would you like to do during your poetry lessons/ let's start with lectures

STUDENT: ** I think we should encourage people more to appreciate the poetry more * I appreciate because I quite an artistic mind but I know some people don't consider it important * I think if we encourage people but the thing is I don't really know how * maybe approaching it with more enthusiasm * even the teachers sometimes students depend on the teachers to know how fun the lesson is * so even if the teacher is more enthusiastic about the thing we'd be more enthusiastic to do it * if the teacher is gloomy about the subject then we're going to be gloomy about it too

INTERVIEWER: how about your literary criticism seminars/ is there anything else that you'd like to see/

STUDENT: I don't know what else to add to be honest

INTERVIEWER: and tutorials on poetry/

STUDENT: more analysis and more focus on what was going through the poet's mind I think

INTERVIEWER: how could that be achieved/

STUDENT: after analysing it for example the lecturer could ask for different points of view * because we hear other people's point of view but not everyone's because in one hour not everyone manages to speak * at the end of the tutorial the lecturer could list down all the different points of view and tell us which are correct and which aren't * a summary sort of

INTERVIEWER: are you satisfied with your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: yes I am

INTERVIEWER: what are you gaining out of your poetry lessons/ lectures seminars and tutorials

STUDENT: I'm appreciating poetry more whereas before I didn't use to bother about it * and also I'm appreciating the fact that I'm getting ideas for writing about

INTERVIEWER: have your poetry lessons at Junior College encouraged you to read more poetry for pleasure/

STUDENT: if I have time yes

INTERVIEWER: will you read poetry for pleasure in the future/

STUDENT: probably yes * maybe if I find some interesting poems

INTERVIEWER: do your poetry teachers read poetry/

STUDENT: why would I know about it/ [laughs] * I hope so [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: have they ever mentioned the poetry they're reading/

STUDENT: well our crit teacher mentions books and books and books and we just keep on staring at him and saying we have no idea what you're talking about * like I know he reads but the other teachers I don't know

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that your poetry teachers should share what they're reading with you/

STUDENT: I guess they'd be doing their job [laughs] * no seriously they have to do it because how are we to be encouraged if our teacher doesn't even do it/ * you know if you tell me listen I don't read poetry * I just come here do my work correct essays

and go home * I'd think I'm not going to read because if my teacher doesn't then it's not that important * if you're not bothered I can't be bothered can I/ * but if my teacher shows enthusiasm and tells us listen I'm really enjoying my work then I'd be more encouraged

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing poetry * have you ever written any poetry/

STUDENT: no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: because I'm still learning how to really appreciate it * now that I understand it I don't know * I think I'd find it hard * I've never tried however

INTERVIEWER: do you think you'll try in the future/

STUDENT: maybe maybe

INTERVIEWER: have you ever written any song lyrics/

STUDENT: no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: because I never tried

INTERVIEWER: would you like to try/

STUDENT: maybe

INTERVIEWER: would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

STUDENT: no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: because I'd be scared that I'd get it wrong [laughs] ** in lessons I think if we were to do it once in a while even just once to try it * I think it would be alright

INTERVIEWER: and what would be the advantages if any/

STUDENT: it would be fun * you would also I think know what goes on in a poet's mind in terms of how to use language and structure a poem * as I've said I think it's really intelligent the way poetry is written * it's even better than a novel sometimes because a novel is a story * this happened and then this but a poem sometimes is more complicated more complex there isn't a story behind it * so if we had to try it we would get an idea of how poetry is written and even how to read it better * I think

INTERVIEWER: now let's talk about writing about poetry * what have your teachers told you to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: on Wilfred Owen * knowing about the history and what happened and what Wilfred went through is definitely important * so background reading is important * then analysing the poem from beginning to end * quoting in the right order in the right places * and even the structure of the essay * if I'm writing about imagery I group everything together in one paragraph and not write about it everywhere * to avoid a chronological approach

INTERVIEWER: what have your teachers told you to do when writing an essay on an unseen poem/

STUDENT: pretty much the same as Owen * again first we read it once and then we write about style and where how what is happening * and to focus on imagery and use of vocabulary

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to read you a definition and then I'm going to ask you a question * personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry/

STUDENT: ** yes I do put my personal response * not always but according to what the poem is about but if it would make a difference to my writing then I would definitely include it * I wouldn't write my personal view is * but in a way I'd show the examiner listen I've understood the poem and my view about it is this

INTERVIEWER: and where would you do that/

STUDENT: usually near the end of the essay

INTERVIEWER: and what have your teachers told you to do when it comes to your personal opinion/

STUDENT: no one has ever told me about how to write about that in an essay and I think I'd better ask * they've told us to avoid it I think but that's the only thing they've said

INTERVIEWER: why do you think they've asked you to avoid it/

STUDENT: I think it's because since different people have different ideas you might write a good essay but then you spoil it by talking about your personal opinion of the poem * it's sort of out of point * so it's better not to mention your views and leave the essay as it is * your point is out of the point sort of * but it's nice to write about your views * I'd like it because what's the point of writing an essay if you don't show what you think about it * we're not encouraged to do that however

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: [silent reading of poem] I think it is right * in the beginning especially when we started analysing poems for the first time all of us were trying to find what the poem really means * what's the hidden meaning * if he was writing to his girlfriend or not * if he was married * the teacher used to tell us read it as it is don't dig too deeply into it * so in the beginning yes that's what we used to do * I like the way this poem is written because it's true that sometimes a poem it's good to just read it and appreciate it for what it is * it's nice to think further about it and ask questions about why he wrote what he did and so on * but not overdoing * sometimes we do torture the poem too much

INTERVIEWER: and why does that happen/

STUDENT: I don't know * perhaps because some poems are difficult and you need to dig deeply to understand them

INTERVIEWER: and how about your teachers/ do they adopt the attitude of the speaker in this poem/

STUDENT: ** I think this year it's more about exam exam exam and so we're not really encouraged to appreciate * this year it's more tough in a way * it's a stressful year and we don't have time to really enjoy reading the poems * this year it's more about reading it analysing it and writing essays * it's more of a duty thing * but last year for example we used to enjoy it a lot * it was more about learning to enjoy it and how to approach it * it was more about learning and more of wanting to do it because it's fun * there's quite a difference * however I understand why we're doing things this way this year because obviously the exam's coming closer

INTERVIEWER: now I'm going to show you a video and I'd like you to tell me more about that

STUDENT: [watches video] I like the idea of the hand but I was quite disappointed * why/ because as I've said I like to read books before watching films * when I read a book or a poem I use my imagination and think about things in a certain way * then when I watch the film I'm disappointed because I would have imagined it in a completely different way * and sometimes how I imagine it is much better than the film * I'd say wow how did they interpret it that boring way for example * the idea of the hand I liked it but I actually imagined it as mouse and nice lighting and stuff * it

was a good idea to use the hand but it's more abstract than what I had in mind when I read the poem * it was quite interesting though

INTERVIEWER: do you feel that the video interpretation of the poem is describing your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: yes in a way * what came to mind when I read it yes but the video is different * I'm glad I read the poem before watching the film * I prefer to read a poem before listening to it or watching it in this case * I'd rather imagine it in my own way * the poem does strike a chord with my own experience but the video not really

INTERVIEWER: thank you for participating in this interview

Appendix 42 – Focus Group Interview Transcript: Group 1

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this discussion * even though I shall be recording our discussion please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of our discussion and the study itself in due course * what do you understand by the term poetry/

STUDENT A: it's where a poet can review what he's seen or been through

STUDENT B: that and it's written in an artistic way

STUDENT C: sometimes it rhymes

STUDENT D: you can use it to express feelings

INTERVIEWER: do you consider song lyrics to be poetry/

STUDENT C: * kind of

STUDENT B: they can be

STUDENT D: they can be

INTERVIEWER: how/ what makes song lyrics poetry/

STUDENT A: some songs express feelings and they rhyme also so guess that's part of it and it tells a story at the end of the day

INTERVIEWER: what do the others think about this/

STUDENT C: ** it's not like prose * it's shorter * it's written differently so it's like a poem * you just sing it

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading song lyrics/

STUDENT B: I prefer hearing them [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: is there a difference between hearing song lyrics and poetry and reading such texts/

STUDENT D: when you read something you can understand more clearly than when you just listen to it

STUDENT A: but at the same time when you listen to it you get the tone so that helps understanding

STUDENT C: you feel that it's more catchy and you might like it more when you listen to it

INTERVIEWER: do you ever go online and search for song lyrics/

STUDENT D: yes [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: is it something that you do often/

STUDENTS: no!

INTERVIEWER: and what do you prefer/ do you prefer listening to poetry or reading it/

STUDENT A: ** I think listening to it because for example the teacher knows how to read it in the way the poet wants you to interpret it

INTERVIEWER: and the others/

STUDENT D: I like listening to it but then reading helps you understand because you can see how it's written * the structure and the punctuation and that helps with analysing it [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: and do you enjoy listening or reading to poetry/

STUDENT B: poetry doesn't really bother me * I always seem to do well in it * I enjoy it but I think I prefer reading books rather than poetry [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: books meaning/

STUDENT B: fiction novels

STUDENT C: I wouldn't actually look up a poem at home but whenever we do poetry in class I don't mind doing it

INTERVIEWER: is it something that you do here at school or is it something that you also read at home for personal pleasure/

STUDENTS: at school

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT A: ** because at home I don't have the patience to figure out what the poem means

STUDENT B: at least I have the teacher there to explain it [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: you said explain it and figuring it out * why/

STUDENT D: not because it's difficult but there's always an explanation to the poem and sometimes you might not see it * the teacher knows how it is

INTERVIEWER: and how about a novel/ isn't it the same thing/

STUDENT C: no * I think it's simpler to understand

STUDENT B: it's longer and more clear

INTERVIEWER: so do you read poetry for pleasure/

STUDENT B: not really

STUDENT A: no [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: why do we study poetry/

STUDENT D: ** because it's another form of literature

INTERVIEWER: but why should we/

STUDENT C: I think it should still be on the syllabus because it's an important way of expressing yourself

INTERVIEWER: there are some people who feel that we should no longer study poetry in this day and age * what do you think about that/

STUDENT B: I think if we don't study it it will be lost completely because like we don't go home and look up poems so if we don't do it at school it won't be done anywhere

STUDENT A: it's like school helps to preserve poetry

INTERVIEWER: what do you usually do during a poetry lesson/ let's start with your Wilfred Owen lectures moving on to the seminars and then finally your tutorials on poetry

STUDENT C: during a lecture first he reads it and then he explains like the first part the second part and third part * then he reads it again and asks us if we have any questions

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about that/

STUDENT B: I understand the way he explains it

STUDENT A: and then you have the notes and when you have to study you have the notes on each poem

INTERVIEWER: do you find this method useful/

STUDENT D: yes because you have all the notes that he dictates during the lecture so you just go through them

INTERVIEWER: you mentioned that the teacher reads the poem * how about you reading the poem/ are you ever asked to do so in class/

STUDENT C: no not really

INTERVIEWER: would you like to be asked to read poems aloud in class/

STUDENT A: I wouldn't like to do it * I don't like reading in front of others

STUDENT C: I'd rather he reads it as well like it's easier

INTERVIEWER: easier in what sense/

STUDENT C: like I don't know * the way he says it * like when he emphasises the important parts and stuff like that * usually when you read it you tend to just like do it in a monotone * not properly

STUDENT B: I wouldn't mind if we're given a chance sometimes or at least listening to recordings of it * that would be nice * or videos for example

INTERVIEWER: now what happens during a literary criticism poetry seminar/

STUDENT D: we read the poem and then he goes through it and asks us questions about it

STUDENT B: he asks us questions and analyses the poem with us

INTERVIEWER: and who chooses the poems for your seminars/

STUDENTS: the lecturer

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about that/

STUDENT A: I think it's a good idea because he knows more than us

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that we should encourage you to bring poems and song lyrics into class to discuss with your classmates/

STUDENT A: I don't think it's a very good idea to be honest because we'd get a bunch of songs and poems * and poems none of us know much about poetry apart from the stuff we do at school * and songs you might get the commercial ones which have no value

INTERVIEWER: what do the others think/

STUDENT C: it makes sense because if we're to find poems we like we might be more interested in poetry [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: and how about a tutorial on poetry/

STUDENT B: my teacher just explains the title and then she asks to explain certain points in the essay but we don't read it to her * we just hand them in and then she sometimes talks to us individually * and sometimes she just collects them and when she corrects them she tells us what we could have done better

INTERVIEWER: and how do you feel about that method/

STUDENT B: I quite like it because I seem to understand what she wants me to do

STUDENT D: in ours first he explains what the poem is all about and then sometimes he gets everyone to read it and sometimes he corrects it in front of us and tells us our mistakes

INTERVIEWER: and how do you feel about that/

STUDENT D: I like it because you know how the correction process is and you know where you went wrong

STUDENT C: I'm with [student's name]

STUDENT A: and I'm with [student's name]

INTERVIEWER: and how do you feel about your tutorials/

STUDENT A: I think it's useful because you see how he corrects and what to look out for

STUDENT C: I like it because she gives you feedback and shows you were you went wrong

INTERVIEWER: what do you like about your poetry lessons/ lectures seminars and tutorials

STUDENT A: I don't like I don't hate * it's there [laughs]

STUDENT D: I don't mind it but I prefer prose to poetry

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT D: I don't know * I think it's because in poetry you don't have characters that much and I like having characters and the changes they go through

STUDENT B: the same and it's longer * there's more to read than just a page

INTERVIEWER: but how about the lessons themselves/ is there anything you like in the lessons/

STUDENT C: I think in the seminars the fact that we read different poems makes it interesting

STUDENT D: you're always learning something about words * every word is important in a poem * you analyse it so much that you find out a lot and a lot

INTERVIEWER: is there something that you don't like about your poetry lessons/

STUDENT A: perhaps we could participate more * especially in Owen [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: is there anything else that you'd like to do during your poetry lesson/

STUDENT C: at the beginning we were shown videos on the war and Owen's poems * I think we should do more of that

STUDENT B: yes that would help

STUDENT D: it doesn't really make a difference to me the teacher reading it or the tape

INTERVIEWER: have your poetry lessons at Junior College encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure/

STUDENT A: not really

STUDENTS: no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT B: it's not my thing

STUDENT C: no lesson would encourage me I think [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT C: because I don't enjoy reading poetry * it's like I wouldn't sit down and read a poem

STUDENT D: it's not the kind of the thing that appeals to me * when I was younger it was easier * I used to write poetry

STUDENT B: yeah me too

STUDENT D: but now I find it really confusing and you have to analyse it

STUDENT A: it's more of a task now

INTERVIEWER: would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the MC English syllabus/

STUDENT B: I used to do it when I was in secondary [the others nod in agreement] * but now I can't imagine myself doing it * it's harder

STUDENT C: I don't think it would be very fair if we were to be asked to write poetry * especially if the poems we read at this level

STUDENT D: when we were younger we could write about anything but now it has to be in a certain way and it has to have figures of speech and deep meanings

STUDENT A: I think the fact that we analyse it so much kind of * discourages us [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: and if we had to train you/ if we had to show you how to do it would that make a difference/

STUDENT C: probably not * you could try but I still wouldn't enjoy it

INTERVIEWER: personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry/

STUDENT B: ** I used to * now I stopped

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT B: I have no idea * I think a teacher told me off once because of it

INTERVIEWER: here/

STUDENT B: no not here * in secondary * like it's not about you * it's about the poem and what the poet wanted to say

STUDENT A: I used to as well but only in the conclusion [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: and why did you include it only in the conclusion/

STUDENT A: because I saw that the other paragraphs were about the poem and to conclude it I found it reasonable to add my own opinion

INTERVIEWER: was it something that you were told to do by your teachers/

STUDENT A: no it just came naturally * then when I came here I just stopped doing it * I don't even know why

STUDENT C: no I've never done it

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT C: because I've always been told that the essay is about what the poet wanted to say

STUDENT D: in secondary they used to tell us to leave it for the conclusion

INTERVIEWER: do you think it's important to include your personal response in your essays/

STUDENT B: ** not really

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT B: because the whole point of the essay is to explain what the poet wants to say * his feelings not your feelings

STUDENT D: you're not part of the poem

INTERVIEWER: when you're reading a poem do you formulate a response to the poem/

STUDENT A: I think you just analyse it * you don't stop to think how you feel about it * you just do what the teacher says * like analyse the poem [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to discuss it together as a group * then I'd like you to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENTS: [read the poem silently]

STUDENT C: sometimes yes

INTERVIEWER: how/

STUDENT C: when the poem is really confusing or like it doesn't make sense I try to get a meaning out of it * what is he trying to say/

STUDENT A: I think you can't help trying to find out the secret meaning behind it

STUDENT D: we do analyse everything in the poem but then it's like sometimes even without knowing you start seeing too much in it

STUDENT B: like we had a test last week and I tried to find a meaning that didn't exist but I was so deep into it that you automatically do it

STUDENT A: you try to find something hidden behind the lines that might not actually be there

STUDENT C: I think it's because of what we were told before * like in secondary school we were always told to find the message or the theme and that was the main focus * find the theme and find out what he's trying to say

STUDENT D: but now it's different

INTERVIEWER: how/

STUDENT D: now we don't focus only on theme but we look at the way it's written the imagery the language

INTERVIEWER: do you feel that you're still torturing the poem/

STUDENT B: yes

STUDENT A: when you have a hard poem there's nothing else you can do

INTERVIEWER: and when you say a hard poem how often are you presented with a hard poem/

STUDENT B: recently we had a test and that was a really hard poem

STUDENT C: but usually in class they're not that hard * we get a variety of poems

INTERVIEWER: and how about the speaker in the poem/ what is he encouraging the students to do/

STUDENT D: to make them see that poetry should be enjoyed * the way he describes it it's like poetry is fun [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: and do you feel that your poetry teachers adopt that attitude/

STUDENT A: ** I think the general system here in Malta is to focus on the exams not on enjoyment of the subject * we just cover the syllabus and that's more important than anything else

STUDENT C: like if you just make students have fun without covering the syllabus that wouldn't be good so it's unavoidable that in poetry lessons we analyse poems rather than try to enjoy poetry

INTERVIEWER: have you ever had a teacher who tried to make you enjoy poetry rather than torture it/

STUDENT B: yes yes [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: where/

STUDENT B: in secondary

INTERVIEWER: and how did you feel about it/

STUDENT B: I enjoyed the lesson and didn't worry about what the poem meant

STUDENT D: I had a teacher who always asked us to think about how to relate the poem to our lives * we used to really have fun

STUDENT A: but obviously we had more time in secondary school than we have here * here it's a constant rush

STUDENT C: I had a teacher who used to make poetry fun * she used to go on the floor and pretend that she was a dog * but we learnt at the end of the day * it wasn't just fun and games * she got down to what she needed to do

INTERVIEWER: do you remember those lessons/

STUDENT C: yes * those were the best lessons I ever had [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like to show you a video and I'd like you tell me more about what we were discussing

STUDENTS: [watch video]

STUDENT A: this is more interesting [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: how/

STUDENT A: I don't know * It's presented in a different way and personally I prefer that way * watching it

INTERVIEWER: and the others/

STUDENT B: yes I prefer it like this [the others nod in agreement]

STUDENT D: when I read it I imagined a class and the teacher acting it out while the kids were just like trying to squeeze something out of it

STUDENT C: if I were a teacher I would try to include videos * perhaps not all the time but it's a good way to try and get them into the lesson

STUDENT A: there's more interest in a way

STUDENT C: they would see it in a different way as well by watching a video

STUDENT D: I would start with the handout first to make them imagine it first [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: thanks a lot for participating in this group interview

Appendix 43 – Focus Group Interview Transcript: Group 2

INTERVIEWER: thank you for choosing to participate in this discussion * even though I shall be recording our discussion please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports * the recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of our discussion and the study itself in due course * what do you understand by the term poetry/

STUDENT A: a place where you express your feelings/

STUDENT B: same thing yes

STUDENT C: a particular situation and it's written in a creative way

INTERVIEWER: what do you think about that/

STUDENT D: the same * I mean it's a written text where the poet expresses himself

INTERVIEWER: do you consider song lyrics to be poetry/

STUDENT B: no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT B: they're not always so meaningful * they're usually to make a hit whereas poetry is actually what you feel right there and then

STUDENT D: some of them may be poetic * they do have a meaning and they give out a message but not all of them * nowadays they depend on beat but back in the day in my parents' time they used to rely on words and brought on a message

STUDENT A: for me it depends * it depends on the message

INTERVIEWER: are there any bands or musicians whose lyrics you might consider to be poetry/

STUDENT C: Kelly Clarkson maybe * she passes on a message * the last two songs she had they did give out a message * to stay strong whatever happens but other songs not really

STUDENT B: nowadays no * there aren't many bands that write poetic lyrics [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: so what's the difference between poetry and song lyrics/

STUDENT D: it would be nice if they were the same but nowadays song lyrics are mostly commercial so * I think that's the difference I guess

STUDENT A: and in poetry you don't use instruments so if the lyrics are unattractive you can't do something else to make them attractive * when you sing and you use

instruments if you don't like the lyrics if you like the music you still listen to it * but in poetry if you don't enjoy the text you don't read it at all

STUDENT B: in poetry punctuation dictates the rhythm while in music the beat and so on * they're kind of different

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading or listening to poetry/

STUDENT C: when I understand it I prefer to read it but I prefer listening to it I guess * it's easier

INTERVIEWER: when you say listening to it you mean listening to whom/

STUDENT C: no the teacher * I wouldn't go to listen to a poet reading

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT C: it's not my thing

INTERVIEWER: and the others/

STUDENT D: I enjoy reading it because it's like I close myself into the text and I relate sometimes

INTERVIEWER: and where do you read poetry/

STUDENT D: alone in a quiet place * I don't read enough poetry but sometimes yes * if I read poetry I'd rather do it alone in a quiet place

STUDENT B: when I read poetry I usually tend to focus on what the poet is trying to say but when I hear someone reading it it's more passionate * I think I would see it more vividly and it helps me to understand the poem even more so I think I prefer listening to it

STUDENT A: I also share the same view because you get also the tone * that comes out through listening to it

INTERVIEWER: should we continue studying poetry in this day and age/

STUDENT C: I don't think it's that important * it doesn't affect us in everyday life

STUDENT A: most of us aren't going to become poets so * maybe a book OK it helps us but poets they change everything even the words they change and the structure * so what good is it doing to us/

INTERVIEWER: and how about you/

STUDENT D: I'm not sure * it's like I like classical books and poetry so I enjoy reading them * I don't know whether I'll find them useful in daily life but I don't mind reading them

INTERVIEWER: why do we study poetry/

STUDENT B: because school forces us [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: besides the fact that it's on the syllabus is there any other reason why we study poetry/

STUDENT A: in order to understand more/

INTERVIEWER: to understand what more/

STUDENT A: the meaning of the writer * because even though prose and poetry are different they kind of relate because you get the meaning

INTERVIEWER: if someone had to tell you listen we're going to remove it from the syllabus * you won't have to study poetry next year * what would you say about that/

STUDENT C: ** I don't know * it's nice to study * I like Owen

STUDENT B: I don't enjoy Owen * it's too depressing for teenagers * they should include new writers * it's too depressing * if it were something that affects us daily not war it would be more interesting to us students

STUDENT C: even something by someone of our age because there are people who write poems at our age * it would be much better

INTERVIEWER: so would you still like to study poetry/

STUDENT A: it depends on the writer and the poems they choose for us

STUDENT D: for example the poems we do in crit * some of them are interesting * once you understand them they are enjoyable * once you understand it and you understand what he is trying to say then it is enjoyable

STUDENT B: Owen however is really monotonous * everything's about war * you don't have * there's no change

STUDENT A: Owen's poetry is nice but I think we get an overdose of war * if we had different things it would be better * there's too much of the same thing

INTERVIEWER: what do you usually do during a poetry lesson/ let's start with your Wilfred Owen lectures and then move on to the seminars and then finally your tutorials

STUDENT C: first we read the poem

INTERVIEWER: who is we/

STUDENT C: no the lecturer * then we start jotting down points * then he reads the poem again and we analyse piece by piece

STUDENT B: line by line * if he's trying to point out a message in a specific line we stop at that part

STUDENT A: the most important parts

STUDENT D: we don't usually discuss however

STUDENT C: we don't participate [the others nod in agreement]

STUDENT D: it's quite like parroting * you just copy what he says

INTERVIEWER: why don't you participate/

STUDENT A: he doesn't really ask for us to participate * it's not like what do you think about…/

STUDENT B: he reads the notes and we write them down * we learn the poem by what he tells us not by what we do

STUDENT A: once he brought a stereo and we heard someone else reading it

INTERVIEWER: and how do you feel about that/

STUDENT A: it's more attractive no/

INTERVIEWER: so whom would you prefer listening to/ a student your teacher or a professional actor/

STUDENT A: a professional actor

STUDENT D: it depends because we had a replacement lesson with another teacher and it was much better than any lesson I had with the teacher we have now * so it's like I prefer him to the recording

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT D: I don't know * he went into so much detail and it wasn't like now write this and this and this * during the replacement lesson we were contributing * it was more of a discussion

STUDENT C: he told us stories to make us appreciate it more

INTERVIEWER: what goes on during a literary criticism poetry seminar/

STUDENT A: first we read on our own * then the teacher reads it aloud and then we start analysing word by word

STUDENT B: but he asks for our thoughts on the poem

STUDENT D: what we think this line means

INTERVIEWER: and do you like that/

STUDENTS: yes

INTERVIEWER: and what goes on in a tutorial on poetry/

STUDENT B: the teacher reads it

INTERVIEWER: reads what/ the poem or the essay/

STUDENT B: when it's on crit he reads the poem first and explains it and then he reads the essay * if it's on Owen then he just reads the essay

STUDENT C: and he gives us feedback about it

STUDENT D: our teacher doesn't read it * we don't read what we wrote * we just explain to him what we did and he just gives us feedback on what we tell him

STUDENT A: and tells us what we were meant to grasp

INTERVIEWER: what do you like about your poetry lessons/ lectures seminars and tutorials

STUDENT A: ** maybe when a professional actor reads the poem

STUDENT B: because you can imagine what the poem feels like * the tone and the rhythm

INTERVIEWER: and the others/

STUDENT D: finding out what the poem is about eh/ * like finding the meaning

STUDENT C: the different views of different poets * the different ways in which they see things

INTERVIEWER: is there anything that you don't like about your poetry lessons/

STUDENT B: the fact that we don't do anything * not in crit but the fact that in Owen no one says anything [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: what do you mean by that/

STUDENT D: it's not really a poetry lesson

STUDENT A: it's more like copy and paste

STUDENT C: exactly because he writes things on the board and we copy them

STUDENT B: it's like going on Wikipedia looking up what the poem is about and that's it

STUDENT C: what I find useful is that he makes links with other poems so when we write essays we can do the same

INTERVIEWER: do you find your poetry lessons useful/

STUDENT A: yes because we analyse the poem and find the important parts

STUDENT D: and we know what the poem is relying on

STUDENT C: I think you could say they're useful but not enjoyable * there's a difference

STUDENT B: crit is enjoyable sometimes but Owen not really

STUDENT D: when we had that replacement it was very good however

INTERVIEWER: why is crit enjoyable/

STUDENT B: because we're more involved

STUDENT A: and we do different poems

INTERVIEWER: is there anything else that you'd like to do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT B: more involvement of the students

STUDENT A: videos and pictures perhaps * because they leave an image in your mind * you can help yourself understand the poem more

INTERVIEWER: have your poetry lessons here at Junior College encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure/

STUDENT B: no [laughs] [the others nod in agreement]

STUDENTS: no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT B: because the poems we tackle here are depressing

STUDENT C: the poetry we do in Maltese is more enjoyable because it relates to different situations * family relations and so on

INTERVIEWER: but you do different poems in crit don't you/

STUDENT C: but the poems in crit are hard to understand

STUDENT D: not hard * I mean you finally get them but still

STUDENT B: in crit it's all about analysing the structure the diction the imagery * we rely on what the poet is trying to pass on to us

STUDENT A: that's what makes it hard in a way * you're trying to understand what's hidden inside

INTERVIEWER: would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the MC English syllabus/

STUDENT D: not be graded on it * but if it were part of a lesson like crit then OK [the others nod in agreement]

STUDENT A: it's a different experience * I wouldn't mind trying it but not be graded on it

STUDENT B: it would be exciting and more interesting * we'd get to feel the same way the writers do and get to put our feeling into it [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: and how would that help you/

STUDENT B: because you can relate certain words like I used that word and the writer uses it too and we can relate the feeling and learn how he uses it

STUDENT C: it would also help for the exam I think

INTERVIEWER: how/

STUDENT C: because if you're doing it on your own and then you're given a text to analyse you can put yourself in the writer's shoes * you can understand why and how

STUDENT A: you can apply what you learn in class to understand what the writer is trying to do when you're reading a poem

INTERVIEWER: personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry/

STUDENTS: no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT D: because we analyse a poem too much to actually be able to say what we feel about it [the others nod in agreement]

STUDENT B: because first you have to understand what he's trying to say then you'd be able to know your opinion about it

STUDENT C: but the problem is that there's so much meaning in one poem that there's no time

STUDENT A: and the essay isn't about what you think but about what the poet thinks

INTERVIEWER: what do the others think about this/

STUDENT B: in Owen we don't get to express our opinion because it's fixed and so you can't agree or disagree * and in criticism we don't have the time to assess what we think about the poem

STUDENT C: sometimes we don't have the time to even analyse the poem let alone our thoughts about it [the others nod in agreement]

STUDENT D: we're so focussed on trying to explain the structure diction etcetera that we don't have time to give our own opinion

INTERVIEWER: what do your teachers tell you to do/

STUDENT A: they don't tell us to include a personal response * it's not about your personal opinion it's about doing the analysis

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think about this/ is it something that you should include or not/

STUDENT C: if it's something on which we're not going to be graded then we shouldn't include it * if the examiner asks for it then yes

INTERVIEWER: do you feel that examiners should ask you for your personal response/

STUDENT D: yes because then they'd get an idea of what we think about the poem [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to discuss it together as a group * then I'd like you to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed * do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENTS: [read the poem silently]

STUDENT B: it's true * we do have this idea that every poem has a hidden meaning

STUDENT A: if it's about a bird then it's not really about a bird but about life or something like that

STUDENT D: I agree with this poem because we're more focused on the exam * it's all we focus on * sometimes I feel I come to school just to pass my exams and we don't have the time for

INTERVIEWER: to do what/

STUDENT D: to enjoy things * I think that's what the poem is encouraging us to do [reads the poem silently]

STUDENT C: when we enter a lecture we're just there to understand and get the points in order for us to pass the exam

INTERVIEWER: and which should be more important/ the exam or enjoying it/

STUDENTS: enjoying it

STUDENT C: it would be great if we could do both

STUDENT D: if you enjoy the poem you can still learn

STUDENT A: for us every poem has to be analysed but the poet writes it for the reader to get the feel and enjoy it not to get the meaning out of it only

INTERVIEWER: do you feel that you tie the poem to a chair and torture a confession out of it/

STUDENTS: yes

INTERVIEWER: and why do you do that/

STUDENT B: we don't have the time to enjoy it * we are focused on the exam so we try to get the meaning as soon as possible

STUDENT C: in the exam that's what they want from us * the ability to read a poem and try to analyse it in a specific way * that's the difference between a fail and a pass

INTERVIEWER: and what's the effect of this on you/

STUDENT C: we find poetry boring and hard * because when you don't enjoy something you don't grasp the whole idea [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like to show you a video and I'd like you tell me more about what we were discussing

STUDENTS: [watch video]

STUDENT B: I think it's more attractive [the others nod in agreement] * it helps one to understand the poem * I mean many students they rely on images to understand things not text so it would help them more

INTERVIEWER: how about the others/

STUDENT C: if we see a video like this we are kind of helped because we wouldn't feel lost

STUDENT A: if you read it a sentence might not make sense in your head but if you hear it and watch it then it's better

STUDENT D: it would help us to remember more * just like children's books they're full of pictures

STUDENT A: when I was in secondary I had a teacher who used to show us slideshows and that helped me to remember the lessons more for my exams because immediately I imagined the slideshow and the picture involved in the slideshow

INTERVIEWER: would you still like to be given the opportunity to read the poem/

STUDENT B: both * like you read it and see what you understand and then watch the video and then compare [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: is the video what you imagined/

STUDENT C: it's very simple but very effective

STUDENT D: even the image of the hand with nothing written on it

STUDENT A: yes that was good * it's like you remove the meaning of the poem by analysing it too much [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: thanks a lot for participating in this group interview

Appendix 44 – Pilot Study

In order to check the feasibility of the main study and enhance the reliability and the design of the instruments that were ultimately used to collect the research data and thus answer the research questions, a pilot study was carried out largely at a post-secondary school of approximately similar size and character to Junior College. This pilot study yielded a small amount of data that acted as an indication of the kind of patterns and results to be expected during the main data analysis exercise and enabled 'consistency checks of the findings generated by the various data collection methods' (Borman et al., 2006, p. 136) to be performed. However, its findings were obviously 'provisional' given that the main aim of the pilot study was 'procedural' (Andrews, 2003, p. 36). Besides serving as a means of adjusting the research instruments so as to improve their effectiveness (Ary et al., 2009), the pilot study also attempted to establish the trustworthiness of this particular inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) (see 3.4.3). The most salient excerpts from this appendix are reproduced in Chapter 3.

A44.1 Survey Questionnaire (Students)

The questionnaire that was used in the main study was first piloted with 42 MC English students (Appendix 45), but only after being devised in compliance with the recommendations proposed by the literature in relation to the design of such an instrument (see 3.5). Its purpose was that of gauging students' attitudes towards poetry and deriving feedback about their poetry lessons. The gender distribution of the respondents was in the form of 32 female and 10 male students and it is important to keep in mind the small-scale nature of this survey when examining its results. Following Wagner's (2010) advice I chose to be present during the questionnaire administration and thus got an opportunity of tackling and making a note of the respondents' difficulties. It must be pointed out that the percentages reported in the following sections have all been rounded up to one decimal point and that whenever respondent quotations are supplied these were yielded by those questions which instructed the respondents to provide a reason for their answer.

A44.1.1 Reading Materials and Syllabus Components

The first three questions asked the respondents to rank a number of elements in terms of different factors. Each one of these questions was made up of nine elements and

hence when computing the ranking data a percentage was calculated out of a total possible score of 378 for all the respondents (42x9), 288 for female respondents (32x9), and 90 for male respondents (10x9). The overall ranking was based on the percentages yielded by the data for all the students.

The students were first asked to rank nine different kinds of reading material in terms of the ones they read mostly in English. Table 8 shows that poetry ranked at the bottom of the list in terms of reading materials that the respondents read mostly in English and this confirmed the findings yielded by the other instruments. Interestingly enough, poetry seemed to be somewhat more popular amongst male students than female ones.

Table 8 – Ranking in Terms of Read Mostly in English								
	Magazines	Websites	Novels	Non-fiction books	Poetry	Drama	Newspapers	Comics	Social Networking Sites
Females N=32	40.3	26.4	33.3	57.6	82.6	78.5	63.2	80.6	39.6
Males N=10	51.1	37.8	26.7	60.0	60.0	68.9	66.7	51.1	77.8
All students N=42	42.9	29.1	31.7	58.2	77.2	76.2	64.0	73.5	48.7
Ranking	3	1	2	5	9	8	6	7	4

The next two questions asked the respondents to rank the nine components of the MC English syllabus, first in terms of enjoyment and then in terms of difficulty.

Table 9 – Ranking in Terms of Enjoyment								
	Shakespeare's King Lear	Owen's poetry	Literary Criticism: poetry	Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale	Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men	Literary Criticism: prose	Language Essay	Comprehension and Summary	Linguistics
Females N=32	58.3	39.6	77.1	17.4	35.4	70.1	51.4	54.9	81.9
Males N=10	33.3	37.8	68.9	42.2	20.0	93.3	51.1	80.0	73.3

All students N=42	52.4	39.2	75.1	23.3	31.7	75.7	51.3	60.8	79.9
Ranking	5	3	7	1	2	8	4	6	9

As shown by Table 9, Wilfred Owen's poetry ranked in third place and thus this indicated that this was one of the components they enjoyed most. However, the same could not be said about the literary criticism of poetry, which ranked in the seventh place and seemed to be preferred by a higher percentage of male students than females. When the respondents were asked to rank the nine components in terms of difficulty, the literary criticism of poetry was placed second while Owen's poetry was placed fifth. Once again it was mostly female students who considered the two poetry components to be more difficult than others. O'Neill (2006) posits the following explanation for these attitudes: 'If creative writing of poetry and the study of poetry itself do not appeal to students, then the poetry option in unfamiliar texts is unlikely to be an easy option as an externally assessed credit' (p. 111). The results of this preliminary study seemed to confirm this idea.

Table 10 – Ranking in Terms of Difficulty									
	Shakespeare's King Lear	Owen's poetry	Literary Criticism: poetry	Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale	Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men	Literary Criticism: prose	Language Essay	Comprehension and Summary	Linguistics
Females N=32	41.7	54.2	28.5	70.1	79.9	34.0	77.8	66.0	50.0
Males N=10	48.9	64.4	44.4	44.4	82.2	20.0	66.7	75.6	53.3
All students N=42	43.4	56.6	32.3	64.0	80.4	30.7	75.1	68.3	50.8
Ranking	3	5	2	6	9	1	8	7	4

As a kind of follow-up to the first ranking question, the respondents were asked to indicate how often they read poetry for pleasure. As shown by Table 11 and Figure 11 the majority of students claimed that they never did. However, 60% of male students did read poetry occasionally and this was in contrast with the 87.5% of female students who did not read poetry at all or who did so only on rare occasions.

Table 11 – Reading Poetry for Pleasure				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
Females *N=32*	50.0	37.5	12.5	0.0
Males *N=10*	20.0	20.0	40.0	20.0
All students *N=42*	42.9	33.3	19.0	4.8
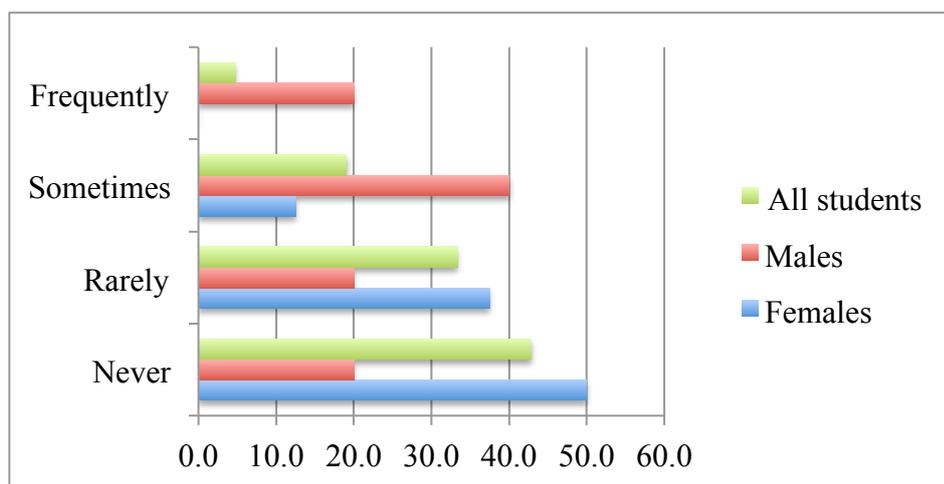
Figure 11 – How Often do you Read Poetry for Pleasure?

It is quite noteworthy that the above three tables show that the respondents answered the questions in a consistent fashion, that is, the sets of data yielded by the first three questions verify each other. Moreover, the findings corroborate those of the interviews.

A44.1.2 Attitudes towards Poetry

Table 12 and Figure 12 show that just above half the total amount of respondents had a positive attitude towards the acts of reading and studying poetry and that nearly 60% of them considered poetry to be important. However, more than 80% of the students claimed that they would not continue reading poetry once they finished their studies. The same amount of students disagreed with the idea that if it were not part of the syllabus they would still read poetry. About 62% affirmed that they did not like writing poetry and almost 72% claimed that they would not like to be given the opportunity to write poetry as part of the syllabus. It is important to point out that for all the statements forming part of this Likert scale item, the percentage of positive responses amongst male students was always higher than that amongst females.

Table 12 – Students' Attitudes Towards Poetry		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Female N=32	I enjoy reading poetry	6.3	37.5	37.5	18.8
	I enjoy studying poetry	0.0	50.0	25.0	25.0
	I enjoy writing poetry	0.0	31.3	25.0	43.8
	Poetry is important	6.3	50.0	37.5	6.3
	If poetry weren't part of the syllabus I would still read poetry	0.0	12.5	50.0	37.5
	I will continue reading poetry once I finish my studies	0.0	12.5	56.3	31.3
	I would like to be given the opportunity to write poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus	0.0	18.8	12.5	68.8
Male N=10	I enjoy reading poetry	60.0	20.0	20.0	0.0
	I enjoy studying poetry	0.0	60.0	40.0	0.0
	I enjoy writing poetry	40.0	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Poetry is important	20.0	40.0	40.0	0.0
	If poetry weren't part of the syllabus I would still read poetry	20.0	20.0	40.0	20.0
	I will continue reading poetry once I finish my studies	40.0	0.0	20.0	40.0
	I would like to be given the opportunity to write poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus	60.0	0.0	20.0	20.0
All Students N=42	I enjoy reading poetry	19.0	33.3	33.3	14.3
	I enjoy studying poetry	0.0	52.4	28.6	19.0
	I enjoy writing poetry	9.5	28.6	23.8	38.1
	Poetry is important	9.5	47.6	38.1	4.8
	If poetry weren't part of the syllabus I would still read poetry	4.8	14.3	47.6	33.3
	I will continue reading poetry once I finish my studies	9.5	9.5	47.6	33.3
	I would like to be given the opportunity to write poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus	14.3	14.3	14.3	57.1
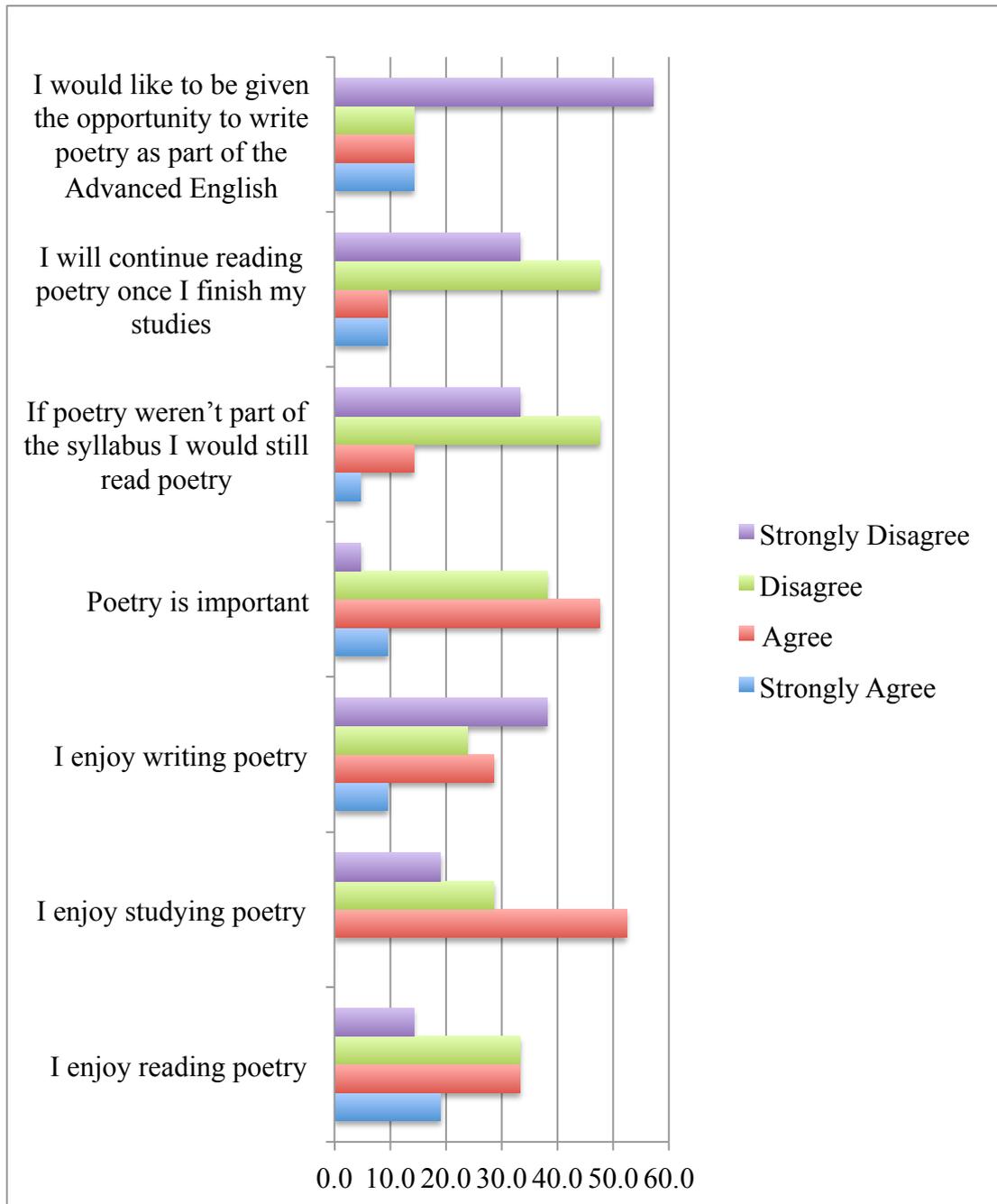
Figure 12 – All Students' Attitudes Towards Poetry

It is noteworthy that the same attitudes towards poetry were recorded by means of the student interview guide, topic guide and written responses.

A44.1.3 Poetry Readings

In order to somewhat gauge the students' exposure to 'Spoken word poetry [which] fosters a "culture of listening" and valuing words' (Fisher, 2005, p. 128), the respondents were asked whether they had ever attended an event during which they

listened to a poet reading his or her work in English. The absolute majority answered in the negative but the highest percentage of students who did attend a poetry reading was made up of males.

Table 13 – Attendance at Poetry Readings		
	Yes	No
Females *N=32*	12.5	87.5
Males *N=10*	40.0	60.0
All students *N=42*	19.0	81.0

When asked whether they would like the English Department to organise such poetry reading events in the future over half the respondents answered in the affirmative, with a higher percentage of male students saying they would like these events to take place. Some of the reasons mentioned by the latter included that a poetry reading was 'an excellent activity for all' which could 'encourage students to read poems' and help them 'to understand the emotions the poet put into the poem'. They also valued the interactive element of such activities since 'By asking questions students would be able to understand better the poet's state of mind and the poem'.

Table 14 – Organising Poetry Readings		
	Yes	No
Females *N=32*	50.0	50.0
Males *N=10*	60.0	40.0
All students *N=42*	52.4	47.6

The responses provided by those female students who answered in the affirmative indicated that a poetry reading 'would be an enjoyable, informative and very relevant treat'. It would also be 'More interesting than the same old lesson' and serve as 'an opportunity to learn more and enhance our skills'. Given the low percentage of female students who actually attended a poetry reading, the above statements were somewhat surprising and make one wonder whether they are a result of a possible Hawthorne effect. Those female students who disagreed with the idea that such

events should be organised claimed that 'Not many English students appreciate poetry and having to attend such events may discourage certain students'. Some female students also affirmed that they 'do not enjoy poetry and…find it hard to understand it and its meaning'. One student even went so far as to say that 'Poetry is not important as language'.

A44.1.4 Choice of Poems

When the respondents were asked whether they liked Wilfred Owen's poems, more than 70% claimed that they liked most or all of the poems; however, a higher percentage was registered amongst female students. It is interesting to point out that there was not a single respondent who claimed to like none of Owen's poetry. Such a highly positive attitude towards this component was also registered by means of the other instruments.

Table 15 – Liking of Wilfred Owen's Poems				
	None of them	Some of them	Most of them	All of them
Females *N=32*	0.0	25.0	50.0	25.0
Males *N=10*	0.0	40.0	40.0	20.0
All students *N=42*	0.0	28.6	47.6	23.8

The majority of respondents liked some of the poems they read during literary criticism poetry seminars and only 19% liked most or all of them. The percentage of female students who claimed that they liked most or all of the literary criticism poems was substantially smaller than that registered for male students.

Table 16 – Liking of Literary Criticism Seminar Poems				
	None of them	Some of them	Most of them	All of them
Females *N=32*	0.0	87.5	6.25	6.25
Males *N=10*	0.0	60.0	20.0	20.0
All students *N=42*	0.0	81.0	9.5	9.5

The respondents' attitude towards the poems they read during their literary criticism poetry tutorials seemed to be even more negative, with nearly 86% of students

claiming to like only some or none of them. The attitude of male students seemed to be somewhat more favourable than that of females.

Table 17 – Liking of Literary Criticism Tutorial Poems				
	None of them	Some of them	Most of them	All of them
Females _N=32_	25.0	62.5	6.3	6.3
Males _N=10_	0.0	80.0	0.0	20.0
All students _N=42_	19.0	66.7	4.8	9.5

The respondents were asked to indicate how often their teacher encourageed them to suggest poems to discuss during their literary criticism poetry seminars. As shown by Table 18 and Figure 13, the vast majority of students claimed that this never or rarely happened and this was in line with the interviewed teachers' own answers.

Table 18 – Students Encouraged to Suggest Literary Criticism Poems				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
Females _N=32_	25.0	56.3	18.8	0.0
Males _N=10_	20.0	40.0	40.0	0.0
All students _N=42_	23.8	52.4	23.8	0.0

Those respondents who affirmed that they were never asked to suggest poems to share with their classmates were in turn asked whether they would like to be given this opportunity. The majority claimed that they would like to be given such an opportunity, however, whereas all male respondents answered in the affirmative, half of the female students disagreed with the idea because, as one student put it summing up the views of her peers, 'The teacher knows best'. Those respondents who would like to be given the opportunity of sharing poems with their classmates felt that this was necessary because 'By discussing poems I like I can understand poetry better' and that 'It would be more interesting since we would have chosen them ourselves'. This was in step with the idea that 'Choices in what to study and how to demonstrate

learning help students to take control and ownership of their education' (Balli, 2009, p. 94).

Table 19 – Opportunity to Suggest Poems		
	Yes	No
Females *N=32*	50.0	50.0
Males *N=10*	100.0	0.0
All students *N=42*	60.0	40.0
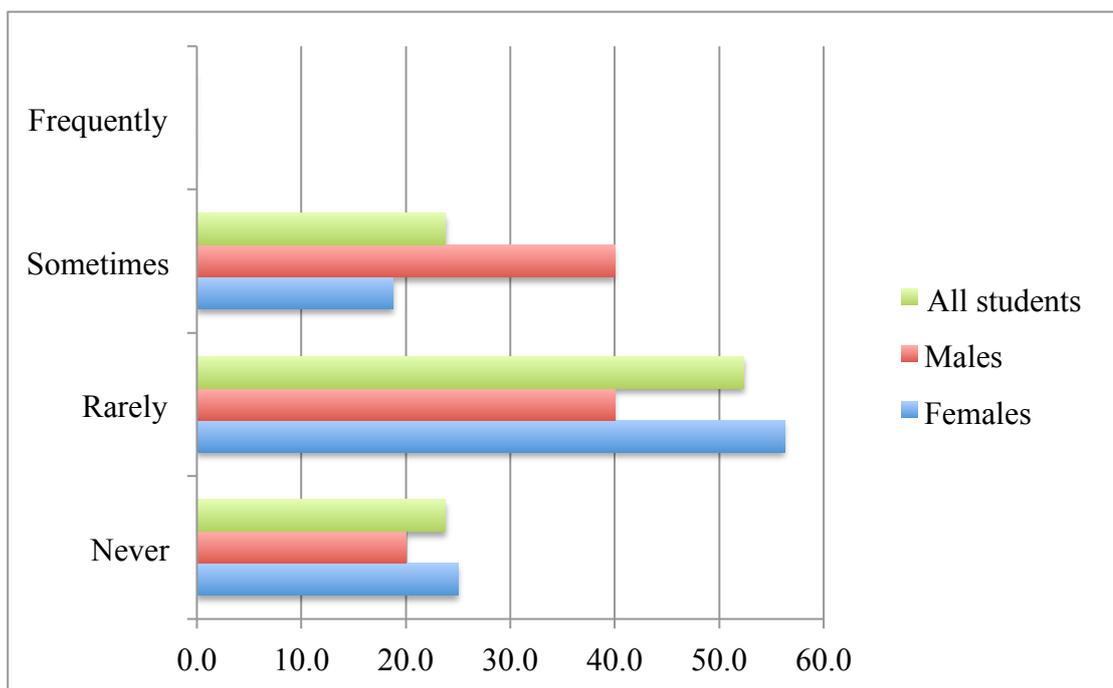
Figure 13 – How Often does Your Teacher Encourage You and Your Classmates to Suggest Poems to Discuss During Your Literary Criticism Poetry Seminars?

The somewhat more positive response on the part of the male students seemed to be a reflection of the fact that in mixed classes boys tend to get more attention than their counterparts (Higgins, 2010; Sunderland, 2004). This was also noted during the classroom observation session, however, since gender is not one of the core issues of this study it is not pertinent to engage in a discussion of such differences in the data.

A44.1.5 Effectiveness of Teacher's Method

The respondents were asked to indicate the effectiveness of their teacher's method when teaching Wilfred Owen's poetry and the literary criticism of poetry, and when

conducting a poetry tutorial. As will be discussed below, the design of these three questions was somewhat problematic.

Tables 20-22 show that in the students' opinion there existed a number of marked differences between the three kinds of poetry-teaching session. Nearly all the students seemed to think that their teacher's method when teaching Owen's poetry was either very or mostly effective and it was only a small percentage of male respondents who considered it to be very ineffective.

Table 20 – Effectiveness of Teacher's Method when Teaching Owen's Poetry					
	Very effective	Mostly effective	Somewhat effective	Mostly ineffective	Very ineffective
Females N=32	62.5	37.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
Males N=10	40.0	40.0	0.0	0.0	20.0
All students N=42	57.1	38.1	0.0	0.0	4.8

However, the same positive evaluation was not registered in relation to the method used when teaching the literary criticism of poetry. In fact, around 62% of the respondents considered it to be somewhat effective or mostly ineffective, with a somewhat higher percentage of male students finding it so. Only female students opted for the two most extreme options when assessing their teacher's method of teaching literary criticism, that is, very effective and very ineffective.

Table 21 – Effectiveness of Teacher's Method when Teaching Literary Criticism					
	Very effective	Mostly effective	Somewhat effective	Mostly ineffective	Very ineffective
Females N=32	25.0	6.3	50.0	12.5	6.3
Males N=10	0.0	40.0	40.0	20.0	0.0
All students N=42	19.0	14.3	47.6	14.3	4.8
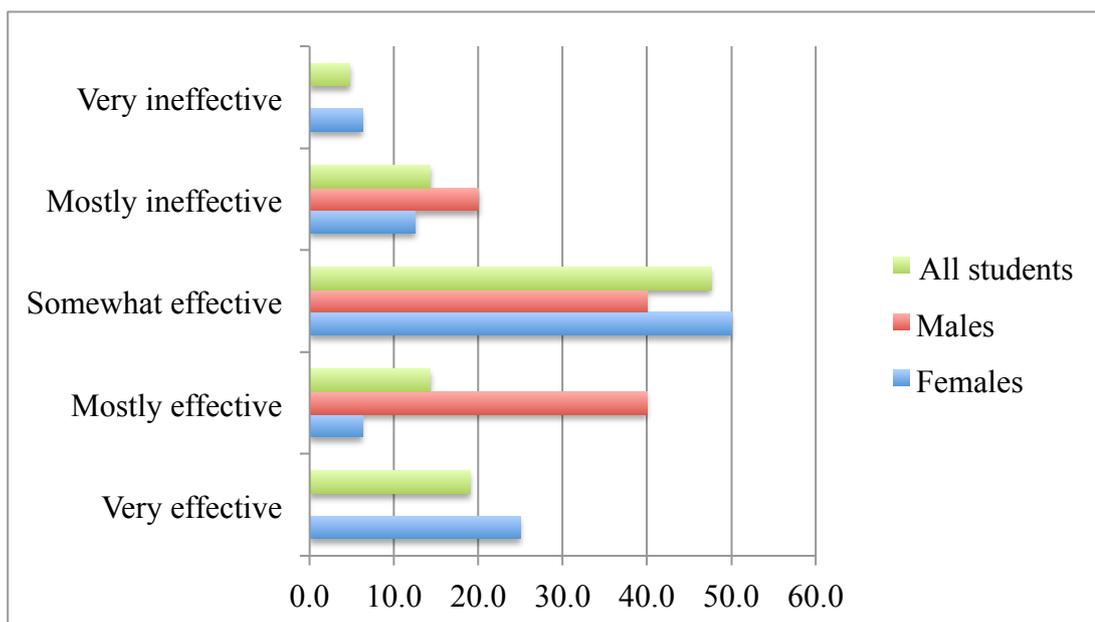
Figure 14 – How Effective is Your Teacher's Method When Teaching the Literary Criticism of Poetry?

More than half the respondents considered their teacher's method when conducting a poetry tutorial to be somewhat effective or mostly ineffective. A higher percentage of male students (60%) thought that their teacher's method was very or mostly effective.

Table 22 – Effectiveness of Teacher's Method when Conducting a Tutorial					
	Very effective	Mostly effective	Somewhat effective	Mostly ineffective	Very ineffective
Females N=32	12.5	31.3	50.0	6.3	0.0
Males N=10	20.0	40.0	40.0	0.0	0.0
All students N=42	14.3	33.3	47.6	4.8	0.0

One of the main problems presented by the above three questions (items 14-16 in pilot questionnaire) was the issue of 'effectiveness'. In order to gauge how the respondents judged efficacy, they were subsequently asked to orally explain what they consider to be effective or not. Most of the respondents claimed that an effective method of teaching Owen's poetry was one in which they were provided with plenty of notes and information about the set text. However, during seminars and tutorials a

teacher's method was considered effective if the students were allowed to 'participate' and voice their views about the poem in question. Another problem presented by these three questions consisted of the ambiguity surrounding the 'Somewhat effective' category. Even though this category can be interpreted as neutral, during my analysis of the data I tended to associate it with the negative categories rather than with the positive ones given that on its own it was not telling me anything about the respondents' opinion. Newby (2014) claims that a mid-point category attracts a lot of attention because many respondents find it comfortable not having to take a definite stand on a particular issue. Tables 21 and 22 show that this was certainly the case with seminars and tutorials and the respondents themselves conceded that this was somewhat true when queried about their choice. Hence, it was decided to omit the 'Somewhat effective' category from the revised questionnaire.

A44.1.6 Enjoyment of Lessons

The respondents were asked to indicate whether they enjoyed their lectures on Wilfred Owen's poetry, their literary criticism poetry seminars, and their poetry tutorials. As shown by Table 23, the absolute majority of students claimed to enjoy their Wilfred Owen lectures, with not a single respondent answering in the negative.

Table 23 – Enjoyment of Wilfred Owen Lectures			
	Yes	No	Sometimes
Females *N=32*	81.3	0.0	18.8
Males *N=10*	80.0	0.0	20.0
All students *N=42*	81.0	0.0	19.0

However, the percentage of negative responses was relatively much higher in relation to literary criticism poetry seminars, especially because half the female respondents did not enjoy these seminars. Even though there were more male students who answered in the affirmative, the majority of them did not opt for the 'yes' option but indicated that they had some reservations by claiming to enjoy literary criticism seminars 'sometimes'.

Table 24 – Enjoyment of Literary Criticism Seminars			
	Yes	No	Sometimes
Females N=32	6.3	50.0	43.8
Males N=10	20.0	20.0	60.0
All students N=42	9.5	42.9	47.6
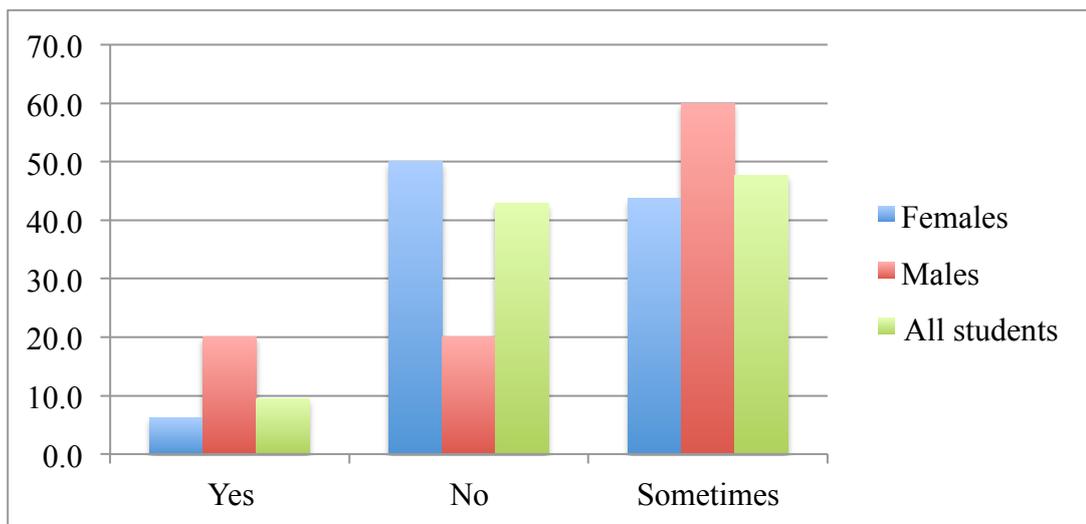
Figure 15 – Do You Enjoy Your Literary Criticism Poetry Seminars?

As regards poetry tutorials, once again it was only a minority of respondents who answered in the affirmative and equal percentages were registered by the 'No' and 'Sometimes' categories. For both of these categories the percentage of female students was slightly higher.

Table 25 – Enjoyment of Poetry Tutorials			
	Yes	No	Sometimes
Females N=32	12.5	43.8	43.8
Males N=10	20.0	40.0	40.0
All students N=42	14.3	42.9	42.9

Once again it seems evident that the above findings substantiate those supplied by means of the two kinds of student interview.

A44.1.7 Satisfaction with Lesson Activities

The respondents were asked whether they considered themselves satisfied with what they did during their Wilfred Owen lectures, literary criticism poetry seminars, and poetry tutorials. Tables 26-28 show that even though none of the respondents claimed to be very unsatisfied with the activities of the three kinds of lesson, the levels of dissatisfaction registered in relation to seminars and tutorials were markedly higher than that for lectures. In fact, 95.3% of the respondents considered themselves satisfied or very satisfied with what they did during their lectures on Wilfred Owen's poetry, with the only respondents who felt unsatisfied being male.

Table 26 – Satisfaction with Wilfred Owen Lectures				
	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied
Females *N=32*	62.5	37.5	0.0	0.0
Males *N=10*	20.0	60.0	20.0	0.0
All students *N=42*	52.4	42.9	4.8	0.0

Female students claimed to be satisfied with what they did during their lectures because their teacher was 'fun…very good…very enthusiastic'. They also praised her ability to deliver the lesson and her 'brilliant understanding of Owen's poetry', which allowed them to 'get a lot of information' and 'good notes'. They appreciated the fact that the teacher made use of multimedia, however, they complained that the lesson was 'too short and I don't have time to take in all that the teacher explains'. The male respondents agreed with the idea that the teacher's use of video and PowerPoint allowed them to understand Owen's poetry better. However, one student mentioned that 'I hunger to plunge into greater depth with the poems we study' and a few other students echoed this. Two respondents mentioned that they were not satisfied because the teacher did not provide them with sufficient notes.

The rate of satisfaction goes down to around 57% in relation to the activities students did during their literary criticism poetry seminars. Interestingly enough, a higher percentage of male students felt unsatisfied with these activities and in fact none of them considered themselves very satisfied. This seemed to be in line with the results yielded by the question on the effectiveness of the teacher's methodology

during literary criticism poetry seminars, and the question on the respondents' enjoyment of said seminars.

Table 27 – Satisfaction with Literary Criticism Poetry Seminars				
	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied
Females *N=32*	12.5	50.0	37.5	0.0
Males *N=10*	0.0	40.0	60.0	0.0
All students *N=42*	9.5	47.6	42.9	0.0

Female students felt satisfied with what they did during their seminars because 'The teacher's enthusiasm helps me to try harder. Explanations and examples are easy to remember. Notes are excellent'. Those who claimed to be unsatisfied mentioned that 'the lesson is sometimes boring' and that 'it could be more interesting'. They also complained that the teacher devoted a lot of time to identifying figures of speech, which they were expected to 'memorise'. This acts as a reminder of Wright's (2005) suggestion that 'Technical issues should never be *the first thing*: personal response should always in some way be the first thing' (pp. 36-37). Some students felt that the teacher should provide them with more essay-writing practice and avoid 'Uninteresting poems'. The male students felt that 'The teacher is good but…the lesson could be improved'. One student mentioned that 'The lessons are occasionally dry, with rather dull poems and a very one-sided lecturing approach' and this was echoed by a number of his classmates.

As regards what students did during poetry tutorials, two thirds of all respondents considered themselves satisfied or very satisfied, with a fractionally higher percentage of satisfaction being registered amongst male students.

Table 28 – Satisfaction with Poetry Tutorials				
	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied
Females *N=32*	6.3	53.1	40.6	0.0
Males *N=10*	20.0	40.0	40.0	0.0
All students *N=42*	9.5	50.0	40.5	0.0

Those female students who claimed that they were satisfied with what they did during their poetry tutorials praised their teacher's ability to explain and that this allowed them to 'clearly understand the poem'. However, some respondents felt that 'It could be better' while others complained about 'uninteresting poems' and the small number of tutorials devoted to poetry when compared with those on prose. Those male students who felt satisfied with their tutorial activities described their teacher's explanations as being 'very good' whereas those who felt unsatisfied wished they had the opportunity to 'talk more about the poems rather than just listen to her'.

A44.1.8 Changes to Lessons

The respondents were asked whether they would like to see any changes in their Wilfred Owen lectures, literary criticism poetry seminars, and poetry tutorials. Given the results yielded by the previous questions on Owen lectures, it is no surprise that 81% of students did not see the need for any changes in their lectures.

Table 29 – Changes in Wilfred Owen Lectures		
	Changes	No changes
Females *N=32*	6.3	93.8
Males *N=10*	60.0	40.0
All students *N=42*	19.0	81.0

Some of the reasons provided by female students for not suggesting any changes were that 'Everything is fine' and 'Lectures are well explained…are excellent'. Students claimed to be 'satisfied' and able to 'understand the poems easily. I enjoy them very much'. They also described their teacher as a 'Good teacher'. Those who liked to see changes taking place wished to have 'a longer lesson so as to better understand the poem'. Male students did not explain why they did not feel the need for any changes but the percentage of them who desired changes agreed with their female counterparts that what was necessary was 'More time devoted to an explanation of Owen's poetry'. They also required 'More in-depth study and a wider range of poems discussed' as well as 'More study notes'.

In relation to literary criticism poetry seminars, Table 30 shows that the situation was inverted in comparison with the results yielded by the previous question. The majority of respondents would like to see a number of changes to these seminars and it is noteworthy that all male students feel the need for such changes given that the survey's results have shown that they have a somewhat more positive attitude towards poetry when compared to females.

Table 30 – Changes in Literary Criticism Poetry Seminars		
	Changes	No changes
Females *N=32*	75.0	25.0
Males *N=10*	100.0	0.0
All students *N=42*	81.0	19.0

Those female students who did not see the need for change did so because the syllabus was being covered 'effectively'. On the other hand, the rest of the female respondents required the teacher 'to elaborate more and write notes on the board... Make the lesson less boring and easier for us to remember things [and] Provide us with training on how to write literary criticism essays'. For most of the students the teacher should also 'Make lessons more interesting instead of just reading the poem and pointing out figures of speech [and] should involve us more in the lesson so that it's less boring'. Once again, a number of respondents mentioned the need for a longer lesson, a wider choice of poems, and more study notes. In their turn, male students agreed with their female classmates and most of them would like their teacher to 'Make lessons fun to maintain students' attention' and provide them with 'encouragement for discussion' and 'to answer questions'. In fact, Dias (2009) advises teachers to move away from a teacher-led approach and allow students to engage in small-group work activities given that these are 'the most convenient and effective way of affording students the opportunity to speak often and at length from their own realizations' (p. 135).

Table 31 shows that the majority of the respondents would like to see a number of changes in their poetry tutorials, with the percentage of females in favour of changes outweighing that of males.

Table 31 – Changes in Poetry Tutorials		
	Changes	No changes
Females *N=32*	62.5	37.5
Males *N=10*	40.0	60.0
All students *N=42*	57.1	42.9

The female students who did not desire any changes claimed that their 'Teacher explains well and provides us with well-written notes on the poems we're discussing'. The others felt that what was necessary was 'A more dynamic approach, looking at a poem from different angles together'. They also wanted 'More poetry tutorials, not just prose [and] More explanations'. Longer lessons, more writing practice and a wider variety of poems were once again mentioned by a number of respondents. Male students once again refrained from explaining why no changes were required but those who did feel the need for changes declared that what was needed was 'to go into further detail on how to tackle poetry and criticism' as well as 'More discussions on the poems'.

While analysing the data yielded by the above three questions (items 23-25 in pilot questionnaire) it became clear that the main adjustments that needed to be made were to their format. A number of respondents merely answered affirmatively or negatively and failed to elaborate. Hence it was decided to change these three items into binary questions and provide adequate space for the respondents to write down reasons for their choice of answer. It is apposite to point out that the respondents' appreciation of a lecturing approach during one kind of lesson and a desire for more interaction during others also emerged during the analysis of the data generated by the other instruments.

A44.1.9 A good teacher of poetry…
The respondents were asked to describe a good teacher of poetry by continuing an unfinished sentence. As shown by Figure 16 the most popular description provided by both female and male respondents was the one saying that a good teacher of poetry 'delivers the lesson in a way that students can understand better'. However, for female students it was also important that the teacher encouraged all students to participate and this was in line with the respondents' request for more interaction

during seminars and tutorials in other sections of the questionnaire. For males, the teacher's ability to make students love poetry and the willingness to use all available resources were of equal importance.

		Value
All	delivers the lesson in a way that students can understand better	35.7
Male	should be able to make students love poetry	20.0
	uses all available resources	20.0
	loves poetry a lot and teaches it with pleasure	10.0
	delivers the lesson in a way that students can understand better	50.0
Female	selects interesting poems	6.3
	makes poetry sound easy	6.3
	will make you remember the lesson	6.3
	doesn't just ramble on about the poem	3.1
	encourages all students to participate	18.8
	makes lessons appealing by discussing poem's background	15.6
	makes us feel the emotions the poem conveys	6.3
	makes poetry pleasurable	6.3
	delivers the lesson in a way that students can understand better	31.3

Figure 16 – A Good Teacher of Poetry…

Attention must be drawn to the fact that the above definitions of a good teacher are a result of the conflation of a large variety of answers supplied by the respondents.

A44.2 Classroom Observation Scheme

In order to pilot the observation scheme (Appendix 46) a literary criticism lesson was observed and this was done in accordance with the recommendations informing the use of such an instrument in a research study (see 3.6.3). The lesson was based on the poems 'The Daffodils' and 'To Daffodils' by William Wordsworth and Robert Herrick respectively. The lesson was delivered by a teacher with 15 years' teaching experience, who despite having a Master's degree in English Literature did not have a formal teaching qualification. This made her typical of the kind of untrained literature teachers described by Showalter (2003, p. 4) and the teachers forming part of the main study. The lesson took place towards the end of the first term and there were a total of 14 second-year students in class, five males and nine females. The class layout was organised in the traditional manner (Waterhouse & Dickinson, 2001) of the teacher's desk standing at the front of the class and the students' desks facing it. The students' desks were organised in three rows and three columns, the central one made up of three desks and the lateral ones made up of two. This was also the typical classroom arrangement found at the school in the main study.

A44.2.1 Events Checklist

Interval recording was used during the piloting of the events checklist forming part of the observation scheme and so every minute all the events that occurred during the preceding sixty seconds were recorded by means of the events checklist. As suggested by Dörnyei (2007, p. 180), the total tally marks for each event were added up and percentages acquired by dividing the sum by the total lesson time (55 minutes) and multiplying it by 100.

Table 32 – Frequency of Classroom Events		
	Explains	63.6
	Open question	18.2
	Closed question	29.1
	Responds	18.2
	Reads aloud	0.0
Teacher	Diagnostic follow-up	27.3
	Gives answer	0.0
	Invites pair discussion	0.0
	Invites small group discussion	30.9
	Encourages poetry writing	0.0
	Encourages writing about poetry	30.9
	Invites reading aloud	0.0

	Corrects reading aloud	0.0
	Invites silent reading	30.9
Student	Initiates	45.5
	Responds	36.4
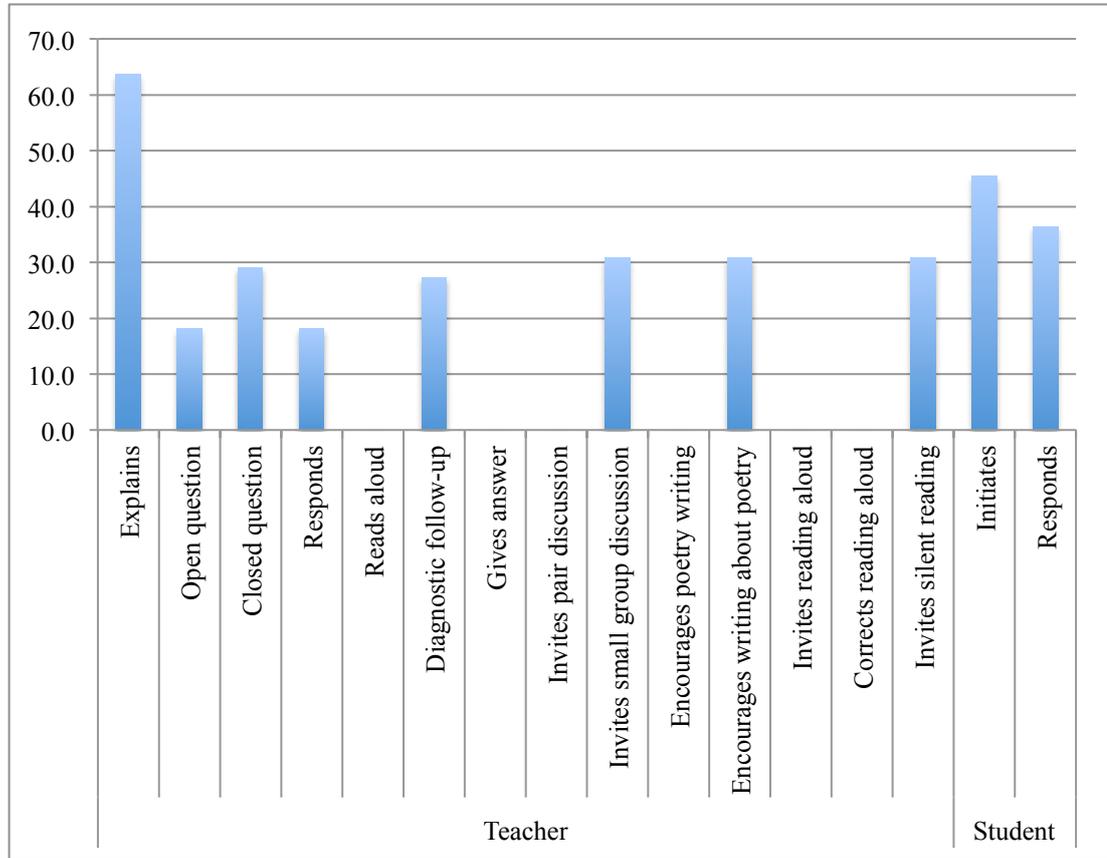
Figure 17 – Frequency of Lesson Events

Table 32 and Figure 17 clearly show that the most frequent event during this particular lesson was that of the teacher explaining something in relation to poetry. In fact, the teacher provided the students with a lot of background information about the two poems in question and since she asked different groups of students to work on distinct aspects of these poems (i.e. subject matter, theme and diction, tone and form) she also provided the students with information about these respective aspects when necessary. The teacher's explanations slackened in frequency only when the students were working in small groups but otherwise they were present throughout most of the lesson. It was also noticeable that while the teacher did not invite the students to write any poetry or to read the poems by Wordsworth and Herrick aloud, for almost one third of the lesson she invited students to write about poetry and to read poetry silently. Moreover, even though she did not invite any pair discussion of the poem, group work was present for almost one third of the lesson. However, Harkin et al.

(2001) warn that 'Supposedly student-centred approaches, for example using group work, can in fact be highly teacher-centred and didactic' (p. 75). During a subsequent interview the teacher actually admitted that the group work activities I had observed during the session were purposefully devised for my visit and this was a clear example of the Hawthorne effect: 'I said let me do them because I want to be a little interactive and I want to give them an opportunity to speak on their own' (TBB). This made me aware of the need to address such an effect in the main study by questioning each observed teacher about the reasons for certain teaching decisions, in order to ascertain whether these were typical of their style of teaching or motivated by my presence.

Both the act of writing about poetry and small group discussion of poetry occurred in the first half of the lesson, as did silent reading. The second half was dominated mostly by the teacher's closed questions, explanations and diagnostic follow-up, and by the students' responses and initiations. The latter registered a relatively high percentage and this was probably due to the fact that each group of students intervened quite frequently during the second half of the lesson to put forward their ideas about the two poems in question. What is particularly interesting is that even though the frequency of closed questions on the part of the teacher is somewhat higher than that of open questions, the frequency of initiations on the part of the students is still higher than that of their responses. The latter obviously encompass both responses to closed and open questions, however, the data seems to indicate that this particular class of students were quite willing to engage with poetry and to actively involve themselves in discussing the poems by Wordsworth and Herrick. Nonetheless, it was also quite apparent that in spite of this attitude on the students' part, teacher talk was still the most dominant phenomenon during this lesson. After observing a poetry lesson containing a 'high level of teacher input', Kress et al. (2005) came to the conclusion that this 'indicates the extent to which the teachers…felt students needed assistance and guidance' (p. 79) in face of an impending examination. The consequence of this is that the teacher's role of expert reader overshadows that of the students. All this suggested that the events checklist would be able to provide me with a clear picture of the kind of interaction taking place in the lessons observed as part of the main study.

Certain categories in the events checklist did not register any frequency and upon further consideration it was decided that the categories 'Gives answer' and

'Corrects reading aloud' should best be omitted so as to facilitate the inclusion of events that despite occurring quite often during the observed lesson were not present in the checklist, namely: 'Writes notes on the board', 'Encourages use of worksheet' and 'Refers to exam'. The descriptor for the category entitled 'Diagnostic follow-up' was amended to reflect the fact that the teacher not only provided such follow-up to a student's question but even to a suggestion or comment about poetry.

A44.2.2 Rating Scale

The last element constituting the observation scheme used in this study was in the form of a four-point rating scale. This was completed at the end of the observed lesson and it helped to throw further light on a number of factors pertaining to the teacher's adopted pedagogy, factors which might have impinged on the students' engagement with poetry during the session. As suggested by Simpson and Tuson (2003, p. 44), a rating scale allows the observer to judge a lesson against a set of criteria and hence it is somewhat subjective. However, observer bias is usually minimised by means of the kind of mixed methods approach employed in this study (see 3.3). In fact, Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that triangulation helps in 'improving the probability that findings and interpretations will be found credible' (p. 305). The presence of another observer would have assured inter-rater reliability but permission for this was not granted.

Table 33 shows that the lesson's main strengths consisted of the teacher's satisfactory planning and organisational skills, and her attempts to encourage student participation notwithstanding the high proportion of teacher talk. The overall style adopted by this teacher and the ambience observed during this lesson seemed to have also contributed to the students' engagement. The latter, however, might have been further incremented if the teacher had made an effort to use visual and aural resources and ICT during her lesson (Snapper, 2009b; Sprackland, 2009). Moreover, the main poetry-teaching model observed during this lesson was the content-based model and there were only a few instances during the lesson when the teacher sought to blend this methodology with other models and approaches.

	Table 33 – Lesson Ratings	
		1 – No evidence 2 – Limited evidence 3 – Some evidence 4 – Clear evidence
Lesson Introduction	The session began on time.	1
	The teacher identifies the anticipated learning outcomes for the session.	4
Planning and Organisation	The teacher related the session to previous sessions and set it in the overall context of the syllabus component.	4
	The teacher set out the structure of the session at the start.	3
	The session appeared to be well-planned and organized.	3
Pace	The students seemed to be able to keep up with the pace of the session.	4
Content	The session was pitched at the appropriate level.	4
Model/Approach	The teacher appeared to use one specific poetry teaching model/approach: content-based model.	3
	The teacher used a blend of poetry teaching models/approaches.	2
	The teacher encouraged students to adopt one specific reading of the poem.	3
	The teacher encouraged students to come up with their personal response to the poem.	3
Student Participation	The teacher encouraged students to work independently of his/her involvement.	3
	The students' participation appeared to be carefully planned.	4
Use of Learning Resources	The teacher made use of a wide range of good quality resources (e.g. book, pack, handouts).	3
	Visual resources were used (e.g. pictures, OHTs, PowerPoint, video).	1
	Aural resources were used (e.g. audio recordings).	1
	ICT was well integrated in the lesson and enhanced learning.	1
Overall Style and Ambience	The teacher seemed confident in delivery.	4
	The teacher conveyed enthusiasm.	4
	The teacher appeared to have a good rapport with the students.	3
	The teacher seemed to have good presentation skills.	3
	The teacher maintained eye contact with the students.	4
	The teacher appeared to be sensitive to the students' mood.	3
	The teacher appeared to have strong subject knowledge that enthused and challenged most students.	3
	The teacher encouraged student interaction and communication.	3
	The students seemed attentive.	3
	The students appeared to be engaged during the lesson.	3

	The session ended on time.	4
Lesson Conclusion	The teacher summed up by referring to the learning outcomes achieved.	1
	The teacher set work or reading to be done by the students in their study time.	4

The findings yielded by the rating scale were an indication that in the main study this instrument would allow me to get an understanding of the observed teachers' methodology. However, due to the difficulty of actually judging some of the categories it was decided to either omit these or rephrase them. For example, 'pace' and 'content level' were omitted because it proved highly difficult to observe tangible manifestations of these categories.

A44.3 Semi-structured Interview Guides (Teachers & Students)

For the purposes of this pilot study, two experienced female teachers were interviewed by means of a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix 47). This was done in compliance with the principles governing the design of such interviews as delineated by the literature (see 3.7). Wragg (1999, p. 11), Duff (2007, p. 976) and Burns (2010, p. 74) recommend combining interviews with classroom observation for the purposes of crosschecking of data and triangulation of methods. In fact, one of the interviewed teachers was the same one whose lesson was observed on a prior occasion. A second-year female student was also interviewed by means of another interview guide (Appendix 48). The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes each and they were transcribed according to a standardised transcription code (Appendix 17). All the transcripts and other research records produced for the purposes of the pilot and main study are meant to facilitate the process of any eventual 'inquiry audit' and thus help establish 'confirmability' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 318-319). In order to increase the trustworthiness of the study the interviewees were allowed to engage in a 'member check' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314) of the transcripts.

The data gathered by means of the semi-structured interviews is organised and discussed in terms of the main patterns that emerged during the analysis. The next seven sections simultaneously discuss the data yielded by the teachers' and the student's interviews and this was done to create a dialogic effect. One of the main lessons learnt by means of these pilot interviews was about the need to revise the order of the questions forming part of the interview guide in such a way that the different groupings better reflect the main thematic strands of the reviewed literature,

the latter having played such a fundamental role in the process of formulating the interview questions. This was considered important given that 'the interview protocol helps guide the collection of data in a systematic and focused manner' (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010, p. 124). It also meant that the revisions made thanks to the pilot study allowed the research instruments to address the challenges posed by the main study.

A44.3.1 Attitudes towards Poetry

The two teachers interviewed as part of this pilot study claimed that they mostly preferred teaching literature components as opposed to language, one of them mentioning literary criticism and the other poetry. The reason for this was that 'literature is alive' (TAA). The student who agreed to take part in this study stated that her favourite lessons were those on literature and she claimed that she liked poetry and literary criticism in particular. When asked whether a teacher's delivery had an effect on her liking of poetry she said that 'poetry is more about reading and understanding what it means', this underscoring the idea that poetry is perceived by some students as being intrinsically linked to an examination (Snapper, 2009b).

When the teachers were asked to indicate what material they preferred reading for pleasure, neither of them mentioned poetry straight off. This seems to fall in with Costigan's (2008) generalisation that 'many teachers are uncomfortable with poetry. Many of us don't read it very often' (p. 69) and in a way it acts as a reminder of Dunning's (1966) principle that 'The teacher who is not himself a reader of poetry must not pretend to teach poetry' (p. 12). It was only after being asked directly whether they did enjoy poetry that the interviewed teachers replied in the affirmative, both of them coincidentally mentioning that Sylvia Plath was one of their favourites. Plath seemed to be appreciated because 'she grows with you, especially if you're a woman' (TBB). This was in a way connected to the reasons for the teaching of poetry. For both teachers, poetry was taught because of its capacity to communicate something that went beyond words and for its 'ability…to say things which are real about human nature' (TBB). Hence they believed that poetry should continue being taught in schools because it was still a relevant genre from which the students could derive a number of benefits, one interviewee saying that 'there is a lot of wealth even from the point of view of language' (TBB). However, she also confessed that both

for students and teachers 'it's much easier to read prose than poetry' (TBB) and that students were unlikely to read poetry for personal pleasure.

The student claimed that she liked reading poetry but that sometimes she found it somewhat 'difficult' to understand. The student considered poetry to be quite important for her because it is 'a very personal thing'. She though poetry should be given importance in society because 'poetry is art and it should be part of our culture because it reflects our culture'. The student indicated that what she was gaining most from her poetry lessons was the kind of information associated with the content-based model of literature teaching as well as 'how to analyse a poem in depth'. However, her poetry lessons will not really translate into the act of reading more poetry for pleasure: 'I doubt I'd be really interested'. Even though 'the teacher is very positive about poetry', examination pressure dampened this student's enthusiasm to read poetry: 'if I had to read something else I'd rather read something for my exam so that I won't feel that I'm wasting my time'. She also did not contemplate reading much poetry after she finished her studies since 'I don't actually go for a poetry book, I don't really read poetry'. She preferred 'listening to it in class and analysing it with somebody else rather than just reading it myself' and in her free time she would 'rather read a story or something light than something that I may not be able to understand completely myself'.

A44.3.2 Choosing Poetry

The two teachers felt that students' enjoyment of poetry depended on the poetry that they were presented with during the lesson, especially during literary criticism given that the set text, Wilfred Owen's poetry, was 'the perfect choice' (TAA). They agreed that Owen's poetry was appropriate for their students' age and ability and the subject matter of his poems made his work particularly 'relevant' (TAA). However, one of the interviewees claimed that if she had the power to choose she would opt for the other set text on the syllabus, John Keats's poetry, 'because it is less dreary' (TBB). It is noteworthy to point out that such in-depth study of set texts has been heavily censured (Snapper, 2006a). The student stated that she liked Owen's poetry because it had allowed her 'to experience something that I would never have experienced'. She liked most of the poems her teacher asked the class to read during literary criticism seminars and even though 'we don't always agree with the writer's perspective…it's interesting to see the way he sees things'.

As regards the choice of poems during literary criticism seminars, the teachers explained that they themselves were usually the ones who selected the poems to be read and discussed in class, something that Dymoke (2002, p. 92) cautions against. Their choice of poems was usually governed by the need to make their students familiar with a particular style or literary element and so they opted for 'texts that highlight certain techniques' (TBB). However, both of them felt that 'it's always good' to take suggestions from the students and thus give 'them the opportunity to read things that are meaningful to them and sharing them with others' (TBB). This was something that the interviewed student fully agreed with, even if it rarely happened.

A44.3.3 Teaching Poetry

When teaching poetry, the interviewed teachers gave a lot of importance to what 'the poem is about or what it's trying to convey' (TAA) and this was necessary because 'the theme is something which is not stated clearly by the writer' (TBB), this perhaps betraying a belief in 'The notion of poetry as a puzzle' (Dymoke, 2003, p. 3). Style was also emphasised and students were encouraged to investigate how this contributed to pushing forth the 'meaning' of the poem. One of the interviewees affirmed that this technique was necessary because it provided students with the necessary training so that 'at university level they will have the tools to begin doing more in-depth analyses of the text' (TBB). She also claimed that she tried to give students time to analyse the poem on their own and that she left 'her comments for the last so that in that way you can discover what they know' (TBB).

When teaching Wilfred Owen's poetry one of the teachers focused almost exclusively on essay writing and exam preparation whereas the other one used multimedia in order 'to get to the core of the poem, the pain within the poetry' (TAA). For the student, the phrase 'poetry lesson' was immediately synonymous with her Wilfred Owen lectures and she admitted that 'I like a subject that interests me and a teacher that makes me feel that I want to read more about it'. She explained that this happened because 'a teacher can inspire you in many ways'. The student happened to attend the lectures of the teacher who tried to use a multimodal approach and this perhaps indicated how this approach could make a difference to students' engagement with poetry.

What the student did not like about studying poetry was the fact that 'there's the bad thing that you have to memorise everything especially quotations and stuff like that'. The way she described her literary criticism seminars on poetry gave one the impression that emphasis was mostly placed on the technique of 'dealing with the lines word by word in order to understand what he means by it'. This seemed to be a result of the teachers' act of 'channelling the focus of attention word by word on the reading of the text, rather than inviting the expression of personal experience' (Kress et al., 2005, p. 95). Interestingly enough, the same teacher who used multimedia during her lectures on Wilfred Owen admitted that she used a highly structured approach during her literary criticism seminars, focusing on the literary terms and devices mentioned in the syllabus 'because at the end of the day they have to sit for an exam and write a structured essay…so kind of gearing them towards that is important' (TAA). The other teacher concurred with this approach and claimed that she could not help it if her seminars were 'teacher-centred because I have to make sure that certain things have been covered' (TBB). For example, students were instructed to use a formal and impersonal style when writing their essays and to avoid using the first person pronoun at all costs. It was only once these literary elements and essay-writing conventions had been presented to the students that she could 'give them practical work' and try to create 'the atmosphere…that everyone has a right to their opinion' (TBB). However, as Rubadiri (1989) points out, 'The danger is…that in studying poetry for exam purposes, the pleasure of it is lost in a welter of technical details' (p. xii).

Tutorials based on unseen poems were for the most part devoted to improving students' ability to analyse a text and their essay-writing skills in preparation for the examination. Both teachers mentioned that they gave students an opportunity to voice their opinion in relation to an unseen poem, however, only in so far as it helped them to prepare for the exam: 'the teacher has the job of trying to point them in the right direction because after all in the exam they're going to be on their own so I can't just tell them: listen this is what the poem means' (TBB). Hence, students were trained to assume the attitude of 'a lawyer and you need to make a case' (TAA) so that ultimately they could put it all together just like 'a jigsaw puzzle' (TBB).

The students' ability to analyse a poem on their own was what the teachers aimed at and their preoccupation with the impending examination meant that they tried not to tell them what the poem meant because this 'would be useless as an exam

preparation exercise' (TBB). Even the set text was approached in the same way and Owen's poems were seen as a means of honing the students' critical skills. Despite allowing the students to engage in a discussion of the poem this 'takes up quite a lot of time and we have to stop that, and you start analysing the poem' (TAA). The use of the second person pronoun most probably indicates that the teacher demonstrated the techniques associated with the literary analysis of poetry for a substantial amount of lesson time, thus minimising students' engagement with poetry via other forms of response. The teachers' persistent concern with the examination fits in with Kress et al.'s (2005) notion of 'a *proleptic* organisation of time: the tasks of the lesson were described to the students as anticipations of examination requirements; the final goal had a constant presence in the moment-to-moment activity of the lesson' (p. 79).

The student confirmed that her poetry teacher did elicit students' views and made a note of them on the board, 'but really short…just the gist of it'. She would like her poetry lessons to be somewhat longer so that she and her classmates could 'talk more about it' and she complained that the lessons were highly structured: 'read the poem, read the notes, write the essay'. The student would also like the lessons to be longer so that the teacher would have more time 'to explain what is going on in the poem' since 'it is important to have as much information as possible'. This seemed to betray a dependence on the teacher's 'position of supreme arbiter' (Stratta et al., 1973, p. 41) for thoroughly understanding the poem in preparation for the examination, despite the student's request for more discussion time. The teacher's explanations were important for the student because her 'essays will be richer' and she would be able to 'go that extra mile…to impress the examiner'.

When questioned about any changes that they would like to make to their teaching of poetry, one of the teachers remarked that she was trying to use more multimedia during her lessons whereas the other one claimed that over the years she had learnt how to 'allow…students to take over parts of the lesson' but only because she had realised that 'unless I let them do that…they wouldn't be properly prepared for the examination' (TBB). In conjunction with this it was interesting to point out that what the student disliked about her poetry lessons was 'the fact that eventually it's not about appreciating poetry but that it's part of your exam'. She went on to say that 'unfortunately in our society a poetry exam is structured and they are looking for certain things not about expressing your views'. These sentiments seem to concur with Noddings's (2003) belief that a heavy emphasis on tests has 'wrecked the

experience of poetry…poisoned something that we say we teach because of the lifelong delight it offers' (p. 37).

A44.3.4 Essay Writing and Personal Response

When they asked students to write essays on poetry, both teachers mostly emphasised those elements that would enable students to be successful in the examination. Hence, the essay's structure and style of writing were given a lot of importance and students were reminded that 'you're trying to prove a point' and thus to use all those strategies that would allow them 'to prove an argument' (TAA), including the insertion of memorised quotations at specific places in the essay. It was interesting to note that neither one of the interviewees mentioned the issue of personal response before being specifically asked about its role in a student's essay; at this stage one could only wonder whether such a thing would also occur during the main study. Both teachers felt that personal response should feature in an essay 'but not emphasised too strongly' (TAA) as it might make the essay 'so subjective as to skew the message, the meaning of the text in a totally idiotic fashion' (TBB). One of the teachers insisted that the first person pronoun 'should be eliminated' and that the students' 'opinion should be expressed through their analysis' (TAA). This need for an impersonal style of writing seemed to be something that the other teacher agreed with and in fact she maintained that 'one has to express oneself in a manner which is acceptable within the context of the examination' (TBB). This seemed to manifest a 'desire to change the analytical focus from the personal or sociocultural back to the textual' (Kress et al., 2005, p. 95).

Booth and Moore (2003) claim that 'By its very nature, poetry encourages subjective, personal response', however, if 'a poetry program is based on structure, criticism, and obligatory response, there will be no room for pleasure' (p. 50). The student confirmed that the teaching of essay writing mostly focused on the strategies that allow students to do well in the examination. She also claimed that teachers discouraged students from including their personal response in essays on poetry and that they were told to insert it only in the 'conclusion just so they won't say no altogether'. This was because students were expected to write 'a structured essay' and 'because unfortunately our exam is based on what is written by somebody else not about our own opinion'. The student explained that giving too much space to personal response would signify that the essay 'would be considered out of point and

you would be given a zero'. She seemed resigned to the idea that 'you have notes, you have particular things to talk about and you have to stick to that'. She confirmed that the use of the first person pronoun was not considered acceptable and claimed that its use in an essay 'would sound in a way elementary'. According to Lennard (2005), 'Refusal to express personal opinions is probably tied to being instructed at school never to use 'I' in practical criticism' (p. 341). Interestingly enough the student used the same word used by one of the interviewed teachers when talking about the first person pronoun: 'probably they're teaching us from now to eliminate the "I think"'. This is also in line with the teacher's idea that at post-secondary level students were being trained for the kind of work they would be doing at university.

The student wished she had the opportunity of actually being allowed to express her own views on a poem 'because art cannot be really talked about in just one way'. However, this did not happen and instead she was expected to base her essays 'only on what somebody else is saying'. This meant that in an essay students were not encouraged to express their personal response to a poem or set text and 'in class for poetry we're short of time so we can't really do so'. This seemed to be in line with Christenbury's (2000) idea that some teachers avoid using a methodology that elicits their students' personal response because they are afraid that this will divert attention from literary analysis and due to the fact that 'it is quicker to tell students than to ask them to explore their own interpretations and reactions to a text' (p. 48).

A44.3.5 Writing Poetry

Robson (2006) claims that 'teaching creative writing…requires learning to be differently framed at times' and hence teachers need to be provided with specialised training given that 'The more focused on generic skills the training becomes…the more impoverished it will be' (p. 119). One of the two interviewed teachers complained about the lack of training opportunities available in Malta for post-secondary teachers of English and when the issue of creative writing was mentioned she insisted that for her to be able to do something of the sort with her students she would first need to be adequately trained. This led to the inclusion of a question on training opportunities for teachers of poetry in the revised interview guide. The issue of training is important in light of the fact that in the coming future teachers might 'be expected to model themselves as writers and readers of poetry' (Dymoke, 2011,

p. 148), as is already the case in the UK and Canada. Both teachers agreed with the idea of providing students with an opportunity of writing poetry as part of the MC English syllabus and they felt that this would provide students with a better 'understanding' of the poems they read in class, especially 'when it comes to analysing and looking at other poetry' (TAA).

The interviewed student claimed that she enjoyed writing poetry and she did so 'because I sometimes want to describe my feelings and stuff', however, she 'wouldn't imagine anyone wanting to read them'. She admitted that it was a teacher who first inspired her to start writing poetry when still in secondary school. This teacher used to read poetry to her students and asked them to read their own poems to the rest of the class. However, the interviewee seemed to disagree with the idea of creative writing forming part of the A-level English syllabus because 'unfortunately it's all about structured essays…it's not about your feelings, it's not about expressing your opinions'. This view seemed to be influenced by the fact that the MC English syllabus lacks a creative component, perhaps because just like some examiners in the UK Maltese examiners 'do not consider creative writing tasks will elicit sufficiently rigorous outcomes for assessment' (Dymoke, 2011, p. 151).

Another reason for which the student was not sure about whether such a component should be included in the syllabus was that 'unfortunately not everyone is really capable of writing poetry' so not everyone should be encouraged to do so. Having never been trained to write any poetry, she was under the impression that creative writing was solely a matter of 'inspiration' and having 'a gift'. However, she did admit that the writing of poetry helped one to understand poetry better when reading it.

A44.3.6 Other Proposed Innovations
When asked whether literary theory had a role to play during poetry lessons both teachers exclaimed that it 'definitely' did for the reason that 'it can be helpful when it comes to explaining certain concepts in poetry' (TAA) and that it could lead to less teacher-centred lessons. In the words of one of the teachers, 'we can't run away from theory' (TBB). Moreover, both teachers felt that it was 'necessary' (TAA) to allow students to experience poetry by means of other media not just the printed page and both of them claimed that they did sometimes use such an approach. When they did, the students 'respond' (TBB) positively to such activities.

A44.3.7 Assessing Poetry

The two interviewed teachers concurred that MATSEC needed to supply teachers with information on the marking criteria adopted by examiners when assessing poetry since for the time being 'it is still a bit of a mystery, an unknown country as it were' (TBB). As regards the essay question as a means of assessing poetry, one of the interviewees affirmed that 'to ask students to write an essay about a text they've never seen before is like throwing them into the middle of the Mediterranean and asking them to swim to Malta' (TBB). She felt that perhaps it would be better to go back to the way the Oxford A-level used to assess students before the inception of MATSEC, by presenting them with a set of questions on a poem, some demanding short answers and others requiring somewhat longer paragraph-like answers. However, the other teacher dismissed this assessment method because in her opinion 'the essay has the advantage of giving students more space to be creative' and 'it encompasses everything' (TAA). She was in favour of the idea of introducing coursework though, since 'in the exam you're limited' (TAA).

A44.3.8 Changes to the Interview Guides

After carefully analysing the transcripts of the three interviews (Appendices 51-52, 56) and identifying the patterns that emerged by means of the questions posed to the interviewees, it became clear that a number of modifications needed to be made to the two interview guides. This was necessary because the process of determining common patterns amongst the three transcripts was somewhat taxing due to the lack of a clear organisational structure. Kvale (2007) points out that a semi-structured interview should contain 'a sequence of themes to be covered' (p. 65) and that 'The method of analysis should…be built into the interview situation itself' (p. 102). Moreover, one of the 'Weaknesses' of the interview guide approach is the fact that 'Interviewer flexibility in sequencing and wording questions' can contribute to 'reducing the comparability of responses' (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 200). Hence, the wording of a number of questions was changed so that the two interview guides reflected each other as far as possible; the order of the questions was also revised for the same purpose. Some questions were omitted because the answers provided by the interviewees overlapped substantially with those of other questions, and a number of new questions were included to tap a few lacunae in the interview guides. As far as possible the two interview guides were adjusted to mirror each other

in terms of content and sequence so as to facilitate the process of analysis. This was partly done by signposting each group of questions by means of titles that are to a large extent shared by the two interview guides, thus creating highly similar strings of questions. These adjustments were also made for the sake of ensuring consistency across interviews (Carden, 2009, p. 340; Persaud, 2010, p. 634).

A44.4 Semi-structured Interview Guide (Examiner & Syllabus Developer)
Given the near singularity of the roles of MC English examiner and syllabus developer in Malta, the only way in which this interview guide (Appendix 49) could be piloted was by submitting it to the scrutiny of an equally experienced examiner and syllabus developer. Hence the head of department of English at Junior College was asked to 'shred' (Drever, 2003, p. 31) the interview guide and forward his recommendations.

The first suggestion made by the HOD was that of grouping questions according to their topic and thus it was decided to revise the order of the questions and signpost each section of the interview guide so as to enable the interviewee to understand exactly what he was being asked to talk about. The HOD also suggested that I should consider omitting questions on teaching methodology since this did not fall within the examiner's remit. Even though it was easy to understand the reasoning behind this suggestion, my intention was to explore what the examiner thought about the process leading to the examination. Being in a position in which on a yearly basis he had direct access to hundreds of scripts and the feedback provided by a pool of markers, the examiner must surely have had views about how and why poetry was taught and must therefore have had an idea about what might be considered effective or not. Hence, it was decided to retain the questions on teaching methodology.

The HOD pointed out that the examiner might find it hard to answer a question on whether MC English students enjoyed poetry (question 2) due to his distance from the classroom and thus his inability to gauge what happened during a poetry lesson. However, I felt that I had to disagree with the HOD because from the candidates' written responses the examiner must surely have formed a sense of whether the students enjoyed poetry.

It was also suggested that the word 'impinge' in question 8 had negative connotations and hence it might influence the interviewee's response. Therefore this word was replaced with 'affect'. With regards to question 11, the HOD explained

that the phrase 'What teaching approach' was somewhat too restrictive given that there existed a number of acceptable approaches and that thus an examiner would find it hard to pinpoint one particular approach as paramount. Hence, I decided to rephrase the question by saying 'What teaching techniques'.

Lastly, the HOD took issue with the idea of asking the examiner about the poem by Billy Collins (see 3.9), remarking that in the context of such an interview this question might be considered 'somewhat childish'. However, the use of poetry within a qualitative study has the ability to yield rich data (Cahnmann, 2003; Hanauer, 2010) and Collins's poem in particular tackles poetry education head-on. Thus I wanted the examiner to state his views in relation to the subject by means of appropriate stimulus material that contained all the necessary qualities for it to be effective (Barbour, 2007, p. 85). Moreover, due to the need to ensure a level of consistency and a 'Uniformity of stimulus presented to informant/respondent' (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 121) across all the interviews conducted as part of this study, I could not omit this question from this particular interview guide.

A44.5 Focus Group Topic Guide (Students)

The topic guide was piloted (Appendix 50) by means of a focus group interview held with four female MC English students at Junior College and this was conducted in conformity with the guidelines set forth in the literature (see 3.8). Given that they were all second-year students there was no possibility of them forming part of the main study taking place the following year. In the latter study focus groups would serve the purpose of exploring 'Why not?' (Barbour, 2007, p. 24) questions related to students' engagement with poetry and the teaching and assessment of the subject. Moreover, this tool was incorporated into the study's design due to the fact that a focus group 'facilitates interpretation of quantitative results and adds depth to the responses obtained in the more structured survey' (Stewart et al., 2007, p. 41). In the pilot study the participants formed a largely homogenous group (Litosseliti, 2003, p. 4) in terms of academic ability, gender and future aspirations. Their number was restricted to four due to the problems posed by managing a larger group and transcribing so many different voices (Langdridge & Hagger-Johnson, 2009, p. 74). The transcript (Appendix 57) of the audio recording was supplemented by the written notes I took during the interview and these helped to provide significant details about the non-verbal behaviour of the participants. The next few sections discuss the

findings in terms of the main patterns that emerged during the data analysis and they are organised in a complementary fashion to those discussing the semi-structured interview findings.

A44.5.1 Attitudes towards Poetry

The first question sought to gauge what the students felt about poetry's role in the syllabus; its wording was subsequently changed to make it consistent with a similar question in the interview guides. When asked about the reason for which poetry was on the syllabus most of the students seemed surprised at the question and for them the most obvious answer was that 'it's part of literature!' They indicated their opposition to the hypothetical scenario of it being removed from the syllabus and according to one of them this should not happen 'because it's interesting and it says things about people'. Only one student claimed that she would not mind if it were to be omitted from the syllabus and explained that 'I just don't get it sometimes'.

During the actual focus group it was decided to ask the students about whether they enjoyed reading poetry or not and this question was later added to the topic guide. In spite of the interviewees' overall positive attitude to poetry as a curricular subject, they admitted that they did not read much poetry and that their only exposure to poetry was via song lyrics. One student claimed that she did not 'feel comfortable reading an entire book of poetry, it's not like prose'. This corroborated similar findings yielded by the other instruments forming part of this study and acted as a reminder of the decline in the reading of poetry registered in other countries, especially amongst teenagers and young adults (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007, 2009; Walter & Türksoy, 2007).

A44.5.2 Teaching Poetry

The students were asked a series of questions about their poetry lessons in order to get a clearer picture of the teaching of poetry and how this affected their engagement with the subject. As regards the two poetry components in the syllabus, all the students seemed to prefer Wilfred Owen's poetry to literary criticism and according to one student 'Owen's safe because we just have to write down what the teacher says'. Her classmate felt that 'it's always the same so you just study and there are no surprises'. However, the interviewees did concede that 'it's a bit boring though; she talks about the same things all the time'. They seemed to consider it important that

their teacher provided them with notes and described how 'she explains the poem and then dictates a note'. This seemed to conform to the description of 'Passive learning [which] occurs when learners are confined to a reactive rather than a proactive role. Typically, they do things such as listen to a lecture [and] take notes' (Harkin et al., 2001, p. 69).

If Owen's poetry was considered 'easy because all the poems are about the same thing', the literary criticism of poetry was quite different and in fact it led one student to admit that 'I'm afraid of crit because you're all on your own' while her classmate described herself as 'lost'. The students described the seminars they attended over the two-year course as having been mostly devoted to identifying figures of speech and other technical elements and they claimed that they 'never actually learnt how to appreciate a poem' or 'discuss why it's been written and what makes it special'. Their teacher 'reads the poem line by line and tells us what's important' and in their opinion this approach was used 'because that's what they expect in the exam'. However, the students seemed unhappy with this especially because 'they stuff it down our throats all the time'. According to Nicholls (2002), a seminar does the opposite; it 'should provide' students with 'Practice in discussion', 'Exercise in the use of purposeful discussion' and 'confidence in the art of argument' (p. 93).

One interviewee seemed frustrated by the fact that 'we write essays and stuff but we don't really appreciate poetry and that's what we should be doing'. The students complained that during their lessons they were not provided with an opportunity of engaging in discussions and this made these seminars 'really boring'. A disproportionate amount of time seemed to be allotted to essay-writing skills and the students felt that 'it's as if that's all we do for poetry'. However, according to one interviewee 'poetry is more than that'. Harkin et al. (2001) argue that if it is expected of examination candidates 'to produce some original ideas or at least some arguments which are not entirely predictable or run of the mill…then learners need to be given opportunities to engage in the process of thinking and arguing during class time' (p. 71). The interviewed students would like 'more discussions' during literary criticism seminars in particular and they seemed to distinguish such lessons from tutorials, which the students considered 'useful' even though they described them as being 'all about essays'.

When asked whether their lessons at Junior College had encouraged them to read poetry for pleasure, two of the interviewees dodged the question by affirming that they would continue reading poetry because they intended to study English at university. Another student claimed that 'I won't ever read another poem in my life after this exam'. For her, 'poetry is a waste of time…because you don't need it'. Her classmate too had not really been encouraged to read poetry and she still thought that 'poems are…sometimes hard to understand'. Dias (2009) explains that these negative attitudes could be a result of the students' experience of poetry in the classroom: 'The notion of the teacher as the person to whom students are accountable for the right reading is at the core of students' fear of poetry and their reluctance to read poems of their own accord' (p. 124).

During the piloting of the topic guide it was not necessary to ask questions 5 and 6 since the students had already answered these questions when talking about what they liked and disliked in their poetry lessons. However, despite the overlap it was decided to retain these two questions just in case something similar would fail to happen in the main study. On the other hand, it was decided to omit question 2 since it proved somewhat problematic for the interviewees to understand and upon further probing it yielded highly similar answers to questions 3 and 4.

A44.5.3 Essay Writing and Personal Response

The students were asked whether they usually included their personal response in their essays about poetry and all of them flatly denied that this ever happened. One student explained that 'you have to write what is expected of you by the examiner, there is no room for your opinion', while her classmate felt that 'it's like there's a right answer'. When asked whether they considered personal response to be important the students claimed that it 'can't be wrong' to express one's views, however, they were not encouraged to do so in their essays. This piece of advice on the part of teachers seemed to ignore the idea that 'engagement is a developing outcome of being attentive to and having confidence in one's own resources as a reader' (Dias, 2010, pp. 23-24).

Given that the issue of the first person pronoun became somewhat prominent during the piloting of the semi-structured interviews, the interviewees were asked to explain why students tended to avoid using it. They remarked that 'we're told not to' but were somewhat tentative in their attempts to explain the reason for this. One

student claimed that 'it makes the essay too 'informal' whereas another one mentioned that 'it's not right for the exam'. They confessed that they did not really know whether the examiner would penalise them for using a personal style of writing and an interviewee justified herself by saying, 'if it were appropriate then our teachers would tell us, no?' A classmate of hers did not appreciate such compliance and though that it was not right that they were discouraged from expressing their views in their own essays: 'I mean we're writing the essay so our opinion is what counts'.

A44.5.4 Writing Poetry

The interviewees were asked whether they would like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the syllabus in order to gauge their views about a technique that contributes to student engagement (Burkhardt, 2006, p. 264). Two students claimed that they did write poetry and one of them added that she used to enjoy it when her secondary school teacher invited the class to do so. However, these two students felt that if creative writing had to be introduced as part of the MC English syllabus then fewer students would enrol on the course 'because not everyone can do it'. At present 'you can get away with just studying and being able to write essays' but this would not be possible if creative writing were to form part of the syllabus.

The two students who admitted to never having written any poetry expressed very strong feelings about the possibility that creative writing might feature in the syllabus. Using Maltese one of them exclaimed 'God forbid!' while the other clarified this reaction by saying that 'I wouldn't want to be made to write poetry; it's something you're born with, you can't learn how to do it and even if you could it would be awful'. All four students seemed to agree on the idea that one could not be trained to write poetry since 'you're born a poet not made' and in the words of one student 'if everyone could do it, it would have no value'. Once again the opinions of these interviewees seemed to be in line with those of their peers as illustrated by this study's other instruments.

A44.5.5 Changes to the Topic Guide

Just as for the interview guides, the main change that needed to be made to the topic guide was in terms of the ordering of the questions. When analysing the transcript it became apparent that it would be easier to sift through the data if the questions could

be grouped into distinct topics. For example, question 10 was moved from an isolated position to the group of questions dealing with poetry lessons. These groups were also signposted to facilitate the process of analysis even further and to allow this particular tool to share the consistency of the other instruments used in this study. As shown above a few questions were also overhauled to keep them in line with changes made in the interview guides and this was necessary because 'If you want to make comparisons across people or groups of people, then you really need to get at least similar information from all of them' (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p. 29).

A44.6 Billy Collins's 'Introduction to Poetry'

All the piloted interview guides and the focus group topic guide contained a question based on Billy Collins's 'Introduction to Poetry' (Appendix 16) and this stimulus material was used in order 'to generate less analytical and more imaginative responses' (Morgan et al., 2008, p. 198). Collins's poem was partly chosen because of the reasons for which one should choose a particular poem as stimulus material, namely 'Interest and engagement…Poetic features…Opportunities for creativity' (Woolnough, 2009, p. 55). Besides forming part of the actual pilot interviews, this question was also piloted with a class of students who were just about to finish their two-year course and who could thus provide me with a written response to the poem that took into consideration their experience of poetry lessons while at Junior College.

A44.6.1 Interview Guides

When the two interviewed teachers were asked whether the poem described their experience during a poetry lesson, they responded differently. One of them asserted that the poem was 'definitely' (TBB) describing a situation that she experienced when she used to teach poetry in secondary school. However, presently she considered herself 'lucky' because her students were 'curious' and 'don't want the teacher to give her own definition, her own interpretation for them to write down' (TBB). She admitted that 'you always have five to six students who are there to memorise what you're saying so that they can go and replicate it in the exam irrespective of whether it fits the question or not' (TBB), but this was not the case with the majority of her students. In her opinion the reason for which students' attitude towards literature changed at post-secondary level was because 'they are

conscious that they are studying the subject because they want to'. Moreover, she felt that 'with A-level students if the teacher is sly enough to choose texts which interest the students, which aren't very conformist' then the chances were that the lesson was going to be much more 'interactive' because 'that tends to involve them a bit more' (TBB). The other teacher disagreed with her colleague because during a poetry lesson her students behaved 'exactly' (TAA) in the way described in Collins's poem. She admitted that 'since we're gearing them towards an exam we're losing the beauty of actually reading poetry' (TAA). Her students behaved in this way in relation to poetry because 'they're not used to reading it' and because in the examination 'they don't know what they're going to be facing…they're afraid of it' (TAA). This teacher's views seemed to find their echo in the interviewed student's remarks in relation to Collins's poem.

The student pointed out that the speaker in the poem seemed to be a teacher who wanted students to enjoy poetry but they were only interested in finding out what the poem meant so that they could complete an assignment based on it: 'they don't understand and they want the poem to be more self explanatory so that they can write an essay or whatever based on what they can read'. The interviewee mostly emphasised this issue of incomprehension and frustration in the face of poetry and in her opinion 'they find it so hard that they find it discouraging it'. The student felt that even though a poem allowed a multiplicity of meanings depending on each reader's personality and world knowledge, a student's personal response to a poem did not really feature in a written format: 'not in the essay'. The student explained that an essay was 'not just about what you think, it has to have more depth'. In a highly illuminating if somewhat disturbing final comment, the interviewee indicated that students were encouraged to write about 'what they have taught you to think'. This seems to be the kind of 'Learned helplessness' that leads students to 'regurgitate' the 'mass of knowledge' that they are expected 'to absorb' (Tracy, 2006, p. 16) by an examination-oriented form of schooling.

A44.6.2 Students' Written Responses
The above student's views were reinforced by the anonymous written responses (CD Appendices 59 Responses A-I) collected from a class of nine second-year students who were asked whether the poem described their experience during the poetry lessons they attended during their MC English course at Junior College. The majority

of them confirmed that Collins's poem did describe their experience: 'most of us students felt like this in one way or another. I truly experienced this' (Response B, henceforth RB). Only one respondent disagreed with this idea and this was only because 'some teachers who taught me poetry left me with no other option but to try and find the meaning of the studied poems without giving importance to other elements' (RF). She implicitly criticised the teachers' methodology and maintained that 'the mentioned approach in the poem was never taught in class or even practiced by the teachers' (RF).

The students seemed to be aware of what they liked and disliked in terms of teaching methodology. One student suggested that in Collins's poem 'the teacher shows the students that a poem is open to interpretation and he shows that trying to understand a poem doesn't have to be boring and difficult' (RE). When a student was made aware that poetry was about 'interacting with the poet himself' and giving the poem 'a meaning according to our own world' then she felt 'more relaxed about what I was doing and participated even more' (RH). Another student admitted that 'many students (including myself at times)' considered poetry 'only as a compulsory thing to do if you want to enter university', however, she did affirm that 'a teacher can change your whole view of poetry' (RA).

Connolly and Smith (2002) maintain that 'discussion is as much a social activity as it is an intellectual one and that the stakes of those discussions go far beyond learning about a poem or preparing for a paper or a test' (p. 25). Most of the respondents appreciated a teacher who gave them plenty of opportunities to interact during a lesson. In the words of one particular student a teacher can 'make a lesson more enjoyable' by allowing students to work in pairs and in groups, and the actual process of 'analysing the poem…is easier when one has a teacher who can understand what one is trying to say and lets us express ourselves' (RB). A number of students mentioned that due to their common themes, Wilfred Owen's poems were 'easier…to understand' (RD) than those they read during literary criticism seminars. Thus, according to one student, during a lecture devoted to Owen's poetry 'There isn't much interaction with the teacher…but that is understandable since we have to answer in an exact way in the exam' (RE). However, this teacher-centred and examination-oriented approach could alienate others: 'now I dread the time we have Owen as it is the most boring lesson in history' (RB). What seemed to be absent was an environment in which students could engage in a discussion about poetry while

being fully aware of the idea that the teacher was not 'the expert with the final say' (Connolly & Smith, 2002, p. 25).

One of the students suggested that the pupils in Collins's poem might be acting in the way they do 'for the sake of examinations' (RF). Some of the students indicated that they felt under pressure when reading poetry and this pressure was due to the interrelatedness of teacher expectations and the impending examination. A student claimed that 'the teachers expect a lot from us and we are not always able to make sense of the poem' (RG) whereas her classmate remarked that 'sometimes I just don't understand it or somehow interpret it differently. It's frustrating especially knowing that this could happen in an exam and unwillingly I start to hate poetry' (RC). These sentiments underscore Scruton's (2011) idea that 'the pleasure in a poem's beauty is the result of an interest in *it*, for the very thing that it is', which is markedly different from the 'interested pleasure' one might experience if 'obliged to read the poem in order to pass an exam' (p. 25).

A44.6.3 Topic Guide

The students who took part in the focus group proposed very similar ideas to the ones reported above. One student in particular said, 'personally I feel just like the students in the poem; meaning is what I'm after and that's what the examiners want me to do'. The rest of her classmates agreed with her and some of them explained that they did this because of the notion that 'there's a secret meaning' and that the examiners were 'trying to trick you'. They acknowledged that the pupils in the poem were 'torturing the poem' whereas their teacher 'wants them to look at the poem and let the meaning and the beauty of it just come out'. Quite revealingly they described how they did experience this kind of teaching approach but only once, during their very first literary criticism poetry seminar at the start of their two-year course before someone else replaced this 'passionate' teacher. He 'talked about what literature really is' and 'not just about the exam'.

The teachers' and students' views discussed above seemed to prove the fact that the poem chosen as stimulus material fulfilled the purpose of aiding the interviewees to 'be creative and explore their own thoughts more deeply' (Adams & Brace, 2006, p. 86) in relation to this study's main topic of inquiry.

A44.6.4 Video Poem

The potential of video clips as a means of eliciting an even richer response from research participants (Chelliah & de Reuse, 2011; Essex, 2006) led me to incorporate a one-minute video rendition of Collins's poem (CD Appendix 58) as part of this instrument. This was done after the interviews had been conducted and the data of the pilot study analysed. This adjustment to the stimulus material was also required because of the need to ensure some degree of validity by subtly aiding the respondents to grasp the point the poem's speaker was making and thus discuss the issue of teaching and assessing poetry. This concern with validity was prompted by an awareness of the risks of overinterpretation (Eco, 1992).

The selected video poem was produced as part of the City Voices, City Visions project (University of Buffalo Graduate School of Education, 2009) and according to Miller (2010) it 'demonstrates how the process of designing sound, image, movement, and dramatic reading both requires and creates a deep understanding of the print text' (p. 20). This video was chosen out of a number of others because its interpretation is not too culturally specific in its choice of images and the latter are relatively neutral. The video was piloted with two students who were shown the video before being provided with a printed copy of the poem. This particular procedure was considered significant because of Albers's (2006, p. 87) idea that the visual mode may act as a springboard for one's understanding of the written poem. Their views about the poem (recorded in note form) were highly similar to those expressed by the other interviewees forming part of this study but what was most interesting was the fact that before being given a copy of the printed text they immediately started answering the question I had posed to them before playing the video, i.e., 'Do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson? Why/why not?' When asked for their feedback about the video, the two students remarked that it was 'very clear in its ideas' and 'makes it easy to know what he's saying'. They remarked that 'it's very simple' but 'gets the poem's message across'. The participants who had taken part in the focus group interview were also shown the video on a subsequent occasion and they confirmed (their views recorded in note form) that watching the video 'definitely helps' because 'it makes the poem come alive'. They agreed with the opinion of one of their classmates who explained that 'it gives you a very clear picture of what the poet is saying'.

In his role as a debriefer the HOD was also asked for feedback about this video poem, as were two senior colleagues (Appendices 53-55). All three teachers agreed that the video was a 'simple interpretation and it manages to capture the gist of the poem very well' (TEE) and they felt that 'rather than constraining…it would assist' (TDD) the reading of the poem. They all proposed showing the video first because it 'sort of warms them up' (TDD), especially since students were 'primarily visual individuals' (TEE), this being in line with Kress's (2003) suggestion that 'this generation…is best addressed through image' (p. 56). The HOD emphasised the idea that A-level students did not 'need the video or the film to understand the poem or…need the written poem to understand what the video is trying to suggest', however, he still felt that showing the video to the main study's interviewees was a good idea because 'it picks on the right points of the poem' (TCC). He agreed with using the video as a means of data collection because 'if anything it moves away from limiting poetry to the printed word and presents them with the spoken word and it allows another kind of medium of interpreting an artistic expression' (TCC).

The piloting of the video poem consolidated the notion that using video clips as a means of collecting data has the 'advantage of…remov[ing] differences in experience as a variable in the research design' (Newby, 2014, p. 345). It was thus decided to enhance the interview guides and topic guide by supplementing the stimulus material with the video poem discussed above.

A44.7 Main Results

By means of the pilot study it was possible not only to test and refine the different instruments and procedures to be used, but its insights also helped with the fine-tuning of the framework and research questions (Mertens, 2010, p. 455). The results of the pilot study can be divided into two main sections, one concerning students' and teachers' attitudes and beliefs in relation to poetry, and the other focusing on their practices with respect to poetry. In the following discussion it becomes clear that these two areas are very much interdependent and ultimately constitute the primary focus of the main study.

A44.7.1 Attitudes and Beliefs

Notwithstanding its small-scale nature, from the results of this study it transpired that while students' attitudes towards reading and studying poetry at school seemed to be

mostly positive, the majority of them did not read any poetry for pleasure. Moreover, most students seemed to have no intention of reading any poetry once they finished their studies and in fact they only did so because it was part of the syllabus. Poetry ranked at the bottom of the list in terms of reading materials that the students read mostly in English and in this they were probably similar to their teachers. This seemed to accord with Andrews's (2001) idea that 'Poetry presents particular problems for teachers and students alike in that it is not widely read and…comes at the bottom of young people's preferences in reading literature' (p. 89). The teachers who were interviewed in the pilot study confirmed that they did like teaching poetry and that they were convinced that it was still important to teach poetry at post-secondary level, however, just like the students they seemed to find it 'easier to read prose than poetry' (TBB). This was in line with the notion that 'reading poems with some degree of attention invariably remains associated with the classroom' (Dias, 2009, p. 124).

The survey results indicate that students' attitude towards the writing of poetry was largely an unfavourable one and whereas teachers seemed to feel that it would be beneficial to give their students the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the syllabus, the interviewed students were not entirely in favour of this idea and seemed to consider it at odds with the examination's character. During the classroom observation stage of the study, students were not observed writing poetry and this seemed to be in line with the exclusivity that was given to the act of critical writing about poetry.

The questionnaire findings make it evident that the absolute majority of students in the pilot study had never attended a poetry reading. Over half the students said that they would like to attend poetry readings and seemed to realise that these could encourage more students to read poetry, however, quite a number of respondents did indicate that they felt apprehensive about poetry. This feeling was also recorded by means of the other instruments.

The interviewed teachers and students displayed a highly positive attitude towards Wilfred Owen's poetry and this was confirmed by the results of the survey. As a syllabus component, Owen's poetry ranked very high in terms of students' enjoyment. However, the same could not be said about the literary criticism of poetry, which placed near the bottom of the list and seemed to be considered one of the most difficult components. Moreover, the attitude towards the poems students

read during seminars and tutorials seemed to be much less positive than those they studied during their lectures. One of the contributing factors to this could be that the selection of literary criticism poems seemed to be the teachers' prerogative even though the majority of students seemed to be in favour of the idea of being given the opportunity of suggesting poems to discuss with their classmates.

A44.7.2 Teaching and Assessing Poetry

The participants not only liked studying Owen's poems but they also preferred lectures on Wilfred Owen to literary criticism poetry seminars and poetry tutorials. In fact, most of the surveyed students seemed to believe that their teacher's method when teaching Owen's poetry was very effective whereas the same could not be said of the method employed during seminars and tutorials. Nonetheless, by means of the focus groups and written responses it transpired that some students did find it 'boring' when a lecturing approach was used in an exclusive manner. This acted as a reminder of the idea that a lecture is deemed 'a poor method of learning' if it contains 'no student participation, no rehearsal of what is learned and no feedback to the lecturer' (Nicholls, 2002, p. 78).

Whereas most of the questionnaire respondents claimed to enjoy their lectures on Wilfred Owen, a relatively high percentage of negative responses was registered in relation to seminars and tutorials. The same was true for the activities students did during these three lesson types. The levels of dissatisfaction registered in relation to seminar and tutorial activities were significantly higher than that for lecture activities. The majority of students would like to see no changes taking place in their lectures, but in relation to seminars and tutorials the opposite was true. While some students still expected their teachers to provide them with 'more explanations' and 'more essay-writing practice' during seminars and tutorials, the major complaint voiced in conjunction with these two lesson types seemed to be that they were too teacher-centred. It is for this reason that Nicholls (2002) advises teachers to keep in mind the notion that 'discussion is a key element of student learning' (p. 98) and to abide by the principle '*Facilitate; don't dominate*' (p. 101). Students seemed to feel that during these two types of lesson they should be given an opportunity of discussing poetry rather than merely listening to their teacher's explanations. In fact it was noteworthy that most of those students who considered themselves satisfied with

what they did during seminars and tutorials praised their teachers' ability to explain not the fact that they engaged them in discussions on poetry.

From the interviews conducted as part of this study it emerged that the teaching of poetry seemed to place a lot of emphasis on the 'meaning' of a poem and most of the students' and teachers' efforts were directed at preparing for the impending examination. Hence the analysis of poetry and the writing of impersonal essays on poetry were given a lot of importance and lessons tended to be somewhat teacher-centred because teachers were under a lot of pressure due to all that their students needed to master (and in certain cases memorise) before the examination. All the interviewed students demonstrated that they were very much aware of the pressure and of what was expected of them in the examination and hence they gave a lot of importance to the teacher's notes and explanations. They expressed their desire for an opportunity of voicing their views about poetry given that there was practically no room for personal response in an essay.

During the classroom observation session the teacher's attempts to encourage student participation were not in direct proportion to the relatively high percentage of teacher talk. Despite the frequency of initiations on the part of the students, the frequency of teacher explanations was much higher. This seemed to be a direct consequence of poetry's affiliation with assessment. In fact, whereas one of the interviewed teachers did not entirely agree that Billy Collins's poem was an appropriate description of the majority of her students, all the other interviewees confirmed that due to the contemporary examination culture and because of the perception of a poem as a particularly enigmatic text students could not help but adopting the attitude described by Collins. In addition, showing that the examination was never far from their minds, the majority of survey respondents appreciated a teacher who taught in such a way that they managed to 'understand' poetry. Nonetheless, students also valued teachers who actively sought their participation and who inspired them to 'love poetry'.

Despite the relative popularity of teacher-centred approaches, these are 'less effective as a means of promoting thought, critical thinking and changing students' attitudes' given that 'individuals learn better if they think about what they are learning and…actively engage with the information they are being expected to learn' (Nicholls, 2002, p. 77). The main poetry-teaching model that was manifested during the classroom observation session was the content-based model and as indicated by

the survey and interviews this largely teacher-centred model seemed to be the one that was mostly experienced by the students who took part in the pilot study.

A44.7.3 Conclusion

From a careful analysis of the limited amount of data gathered during the pilot study it became clear that poetry was mainly perceived as an assessable component with practically no shelf life beyond the limited confines of the classroom and examination hall. For this reason the most prevalent teaching methods seemed to be aimed at bolstering students' ability to write about poetry in such a manner that they satisfied examination requirements rather than enabling them to genuinely engage with poetry by cultivating 'enhanced potential for epistemological and affective development within the classroom' (Hennessy et al., 2010, pp. 182-183). Moreover, the pilot study indicated the significant relationship between teachers' and students' attitudes and beliefs, and their practices in relation to poetry.

The consistency between the inferences made and the similar findings yielded by the study's different instruments showed that it seemed to possess 'interpretive consistency'; given the fact that these inferences were consistent with contemporary research then it was apparent that the study had 'theoretical consistency' too (Nastasi et al., 2010, p. 311; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, pp. 303-304;). Moreover, the piloting of the different instruments served to show that the mixed methods design employed in this study truly 'offers a more powerful choice that lends itself to offering complete, useful, and balanced results' (Behar-Horenstein, 2010, p. 579). Despite its small-scale nature the pilot testing proved vital in confirming that the chosen design was sufficiently reliable and effective for the task of answering the study's research questions.

Appendix 45 – Pilot Study: Student Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to complete the following questionnaire. Rest assured that confidentiality is guaranteed and that the data will be used for research purposes only. Please note that all the instructions on how to answer the questions are in parentheses and italicised.

1. Male/Female *(Please delete as appropriate.)*

2. Please rank the following reading materials in terms of the ones you read mostly in English: *(Rank from 1 to 9. 1=Read most; 9=Read least.)*

	a) Magazines
	b) Websites
	c) Novels
	d) Non-fiction books
	e) Poetry
	f) Drama
	g) Newspapers
	h) Comics
	i) Social networking sites

3. Please rank the following syllabus components in terms of enjoyment: *(Rank from 1 to 9. 1=Enjoy Most; 9=Enjoy Least.)*

	a) Shakespeare's *King Lear*
	b) Wilfred Owen's poetry
	c) Literary Criticism: poetry (unseen)
	d) Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*
	e) John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*
	f) Literary Criticism: prose (unseen)
	g) Language Essay
	h) Comprehension and Summary
	i) Linguistics

4. Please rank the following syllabus components in terms of difficulty: *(Rank from 1 to 9. 1=Most Difficult; 9=Least Difficult.)*

	a) Shakespeare's *King Lear*
	b) Wilfred Owen's poetry
	c) Literary Criticism: poetry (unseen)
	d) Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*
	e) John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*
	f) Literary Criticism: prose (unseen)
	g) Language Essay
	h) Comprehension and Summary
	i) Linguistics

5. How often do you read poetry for pleasure? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Never
	b) Rarely
	c) Sometimes
	d) Frequently

6. *(Please tick only one option per statement.)*	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
k) I enjoy reading poetry.				
l) I enjoy studying poetry.				
m) I enjoy writing poetry.				
n) Poetry is important.				
o) If poetry weren't part of the syllabus I would still read poetry.				
p) I will continue reading poetry once I finish my studies.				
q) I would like to be given the opportunity to write poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus.				

7. Have you ever attended an event during which you listened to a poet reading his or her work in English? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Yes
	b) No

8. Would you like the English Department to organise such poetry reading events in the future? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Yes	*(Please give a reason for your answer in this box.)*
	b) No	

9. Do you like Wilfred Owen's poems? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) None of them
	b) Some of them
	c) Most of them
	d) All of them

10. Do you like the poems you read during your literary criticism poetry seminars? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) None of them
	b) Some of them
	c) Most of them
	d) All of them

11. Do you like the poems you are asked to write about for your literary criticism tutorials? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) None of them
	b) Some of them
	c) Most of them
	d) All of them

12. How often does your teacher encourage you and your classmates to suggest poems to discuss during your literary criticism poetry seminars? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Never
	b) Rarely
	c) Sometimes
	d) Frequently

(If you chose option a) please answer question 13. If you chose options b), c) or d) please skip question 13 and go directly to question 14.)

13. Would you like to be given the opportunity to suggest poems that you and your classmates can discuss during your literary criticism poetry seminars? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Yes	*(Please give a reason for your answer in this box.)*
	b) No	

14. How effective is your teacher's method when teaching Wilfred Owen's poetry? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Very effective
	b) Mostly effective
	c) Somewhat effective
	d) Mostly ineffective
	e) Very ineffective

15. How effective is your teacher's method when teaching the literary criticism of poetry? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Very effective
	b) Mostly effective
	c) Somewhat effective
	d) Mostly ineffective
	e) Very ineffective

16. How effective is your teacher's method when conducting a poetry tutorial? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Very effective
	b) Mostly effective
	c) Somewhat effective
	d) Mostly ineffective
	e) Very ineffective

17. Do you enjoy your lectures on Wilfred Owen's poetry? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Yes
	b) No
	c) Sometimes

18. Do you enjoy your literary criticism poetry seminars? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Yes
	b) No
	c) Sometimes

19. Do you enjoy your poetry tutorials? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Yes
	b) No
	c) Sometimes

20. Are you satisfied with what you do during your lectures on Wilfred Owen's poetry? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Very satisfied	*(Please give a reason for your answer in this box.)*
	b) Satisfied	
	c) Unsatisfied	
	d) Very unsatisfied	

21. Are you satisfied with what you do during your literary criticism poetry seminars? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Very satisfied	*(Please give a reason for your answer in this box.)*
	b) Satisfied	
	c) Unsatisfied	
	d) Very unsatisfied	

22. Are you satisfied with what you do during your poetry tutorials? *(Please tick only one option.)*

	a) Very satisfied	*(Please give a reason for your answer in this box.)*
	b) Satisfied	
	c) Unsatisfied	
	d) Very unsatisfied	

23. Are there any changes that you would like to see in your lectures on Wilfred Owen?

_____

_____

24. Are there any changes that you would like to see in your literary criticism poetry seminars?

_____

_____

25. Are there any changes that you would like to see in your poetry tutorials?

_____

_____

26. Please complete the following sentence: A good teacher of poetry …

_____

_____

Appendix 46 – Pilot Study: Observation Scheme

A. Information on the session being observed

Teacher:	Teaching experience in years:	Teaching qualification:
Date & Time:	Type of session:	Place of session in teaching sequence:
Year:	Course unit:	Topic/Focus:
Number of students:	Number of Boys:	Number of Girls:

B. Class layout

C. Events checklist

Teacher Behaviour	
Activity	**Descriptor**
1. Explains	Teacher passes on facts, opinions, ideas and new information about poem/poetry to students.
2. Open question	Teacher invites more than one answer to a question.
3. Closed question	Teacher invites a single response or facts.
4. Responds	Teacher responds to student's question about poem/poetry.
5. Reads aloud	Teacher reads poem aloud to the class.
6. Diagnostic follow-up	Teacher provides follow-up that explains why an answer is appropriate or not.
7. Gives answer	If teacher gets no response to an elicitation he or she answers the question.
8. Invites pair discussion	Teacher invites students to discuss poem/poetry in pairs but not to write.
9. Invites small group discussion	Teacher invites students to discuss poem/poetry in small groups but not to write.
10. Encourages poetry writing	Teacher encourages students to write poetry individually or collaboratively.
11. Encourages writing about poetry	Teacher encourages students to write literary criticism about poetry individually or collaboratively.
12. Invites reading aloud	Teacher invites student to read poem aloud.
13. Corrects reading aloud	Teacher corrects student reading aloud.
14. Invites silent reading	Teacher invites students to read poem silently.
Student Behaviour	
Activity	**Descriptor**
15. Initiates	Student initiates talk about poem/poetry.
16. Responds	Student talks about poem/poetry in response to teacher.

EVENTS CHECKLIST

Time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1. Explains																		
2. Open question																		
3. Closed question																		
4. Responds																		
5. Reads aloud																		
6. Diagnostic follow-up																		
7. Gives answer																		
8. Invites pair discussion																		
9. Invites small group discussion																		
10. Encourages poetry writing																		
11. Encourages writing about poetry																		
12. Invites reading aloud																		
13. Corrects reading aloud																		
14. Invites silent reading																		
15. Initiates																		
16. Responds																		

EVENTS CHECKLIST

Time	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
1. Explains																		
2. Open question																		
3. Closed question																		
4. Responds																		
5. Reads aloud																		
6. Diagnostic follow-up																		
7. Gives answer																		
8. Invites pair discussion																		
9. Invites small group discussion																		
10. Encourages poetry writing																		
11. Encourages writing about poetry																		
12. Invites reading aloud																		
13. Corrects reading aloud																		
14. Invites silent reading																		
15. Initiates																		
16. Responds																		

EVENTS CHECKLIST

Time	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55
1. Explains																			
2. Open question																			
3. Closed question																			
4. Responds																			
5. Reads aloud																			
6. Diagnostic follow-up																			
7. Gives answer																			
8. Invites pair discussion																			
9. Invites small group discussion																			
10. Encourages poetry writing																			
11. Encourages writing about poetry																			
12. Invites reading aloud																			
13. Corrects reading aloud																			
14. Invites silent reading																			
15. Initiates																			
16. Responds																			

D. Observation rating scale

1 – No evidence
2 – Limited evidence
3 – Some evidence
4 – Clear evidence

Lesson Introduction				
1. The session began on time.	1	2	3	4
2. The teacher identifies the anticipated learning outcomes for the session.	1	2	3	4
Planning and Organisation				
3. The teacher related the session to previous sessions and set it in the overall context of the syllabus component.	1	2	3	4
4. The teacher set out the structure of the session at the start.	1	2	3	4
5. The session appeared to be well-planned and organized.	1	2	3	4
Pace				
6. The students seemed to be able to keep up with the pace of the session.	1	2	3	4
Content				
7. The session was pitched at the appropriate level.	1	2	3	4
Model/Approach				
8. The teacher appeared to use one specific poetry teaching model/approach: _____.	1	2	3	4
9. The teacher used a blend of poetry teaching models/approaches.	1	2	3	4
10. The teacher encouraged students to adopt one specific reading of the poem.	1	2	3	4
11. The teacher encouraged students to come up with their personal response to the poem.	1	2	3	4
Student Participation				
12. The teacher encouraged students to work independently of his/her involvement.	1	2	3	4
13. The students' participation appeared to be carefully planned.	1	2	3	4
Use of Learning Resources				

14. The teacher made use of a wide range of good quality resources (e.g. book, pack, handouts).	1	2	3	4
15. Visual resources were used (e.g. pictures, OHTs, PowerPoint, video).	1	2	3	4
16. Aural resources were used (e.g. audio recordings).	1	2	3	4
17. ICT was well integrated in the lesson and enhanced learning.	1	2	3	4
Overall Style and Ambience				
18. The teacher seemed confident in delivery.	1	2	3	4
19. The teacher conveyed enthusiasm.	1	2	3	4
20. The teacher appeared to have a good rapport with the students.	1	2	3	4
21. The teacher seemed to have good presentation skills.	1	2	3	4
22. The teacher maintained eye contact with the students.	1	2	3	4
23. The teacher appeared to be sensitive to the students' mood.	1	2	3	4
24. The teacher appeared to have strong subject knowledge that enthused and challenged most students.	1	2	3	4
25. The teacher encouraged student interaction and communication.	1	2	3	4
26. The students seemed attentive.	1	2	3	4
27. The students appeared to be engaged during the lesson.	1	2	3	4
Lesson Conclusion				
28. The session ended on time.	1	2	3	4
29. The teacher summed up by referring to the learning outcomes achieved.	1	2	3	4
30. The teacher set work or reading to be done by the students in their study time.	1	2	3	4

Appendix 47 – Pilot Study: Semi-structured Interview Guide: Teachers

Thank you for choosing to participate in this interview. Even though I shall be recording this interview, please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports. The recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course.

1. Which component do you prefer teaching most? [*the following follow-up question is to be asked only if the interviewee mentions poetry*] Why do you prefer teaching poetry? [*the following follow-up question is to be asked only if the interviewee mentions something other than poetry*] Why not poetry?

2. What sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure?

3. Do you enjoy reading poetry? For personal pleasure or for work purposes? Can you name some of the poets whose work you enjoy reading?

4. Why do we teach poetry?

5. Should we continue teaching poetry in this day and age? Why/why not?

6. Do MC English students enjoy poetry? Why/why not? [*ask the following follow-up questions only in case the interviewee queries the meaning of the term 'poetry'*] What do you understand by it? Do students enjoy this kind of poetry? Which students enjoy poetry and which ones do not?

7. What do you think of the set text for poetry? What do you think of its appropriateness for students of this age and ability?

8. Who chooses the poems for the literary criticism poetry seminars? What do you feel about this?

9. What kind of poems do you choose for the literary criticism poetry seminars? What criteria do you use when making your selections?

10. Do you encourage students to bring in any poems they would like to discuss with the rest of the class? Why/why not?

11. What do you give most importance to when teaching poetry?

12. What approach do you use when teaching Wilfred Owen's poetry?

13. What approach do you use when teaching the literary criticism of poetry?

14. What method do you use during a tutorial devoted to poetry?

15. What do you usually ask your students to do during a poetry lesson (lecture/seminar/tutorial)?

16. Are there any changes that you would like to make to the way you teach poetry?

17. Should students be provided with the opportunity to write poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus? Why/why not?

18. Does literary theory have a part to play during poetry lessons? Why/why not?

19. What do you think of the idea of allowing students to experience poetry by means of other media not just the printed page? Do you attempt to do this?

20. What do you ask your students to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry?

21. What do you ask your students to do when writing a literary criticism essay on an unseen poem?

22. What do you think about the way MATSEC assesses poetry?

23. Are there any changes that you would like to see to the way poetry is being assessed?

24. Would you like to be provided with training on how to teach and assess poetry? Why/why not?

25. Now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview. Do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson? Why/why not?

Thank you for participating in this interview.

Appendix 48 – Pilot Study: Semi-structured Interview Guide: Students

Thank you for choosing to participate in this interview. Even though I shall be recording this interview, please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports. The recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course.

1. Which lessons do you like most out of your entire English course? Why do you like them?

2. Do you enjoy reading, listening to or writing poetry? Why/why not?

3. How important is poetry to you? Why?

4. What kind of importance should poetry be given in our society?

5. Do you like all or any of Wilfred Owen's poetry? Why/why not?

6. Do you like all or any of the poems you read during your literary criticism poetry seminars? Why/why not?

7. Do you like all or any of the poems you are asked to write about for your tutorials? Why/why not?

8. Do you enjoy studying poetry?

9. If I say 'poetry lesson' to you, what comes to mind?

10. Is there anything you like about your poetry lessons (lectures/seminars/tutorials)?

11. Is there anything you don't like about your poetry lessons (lectures/seminars/tutorials)?

12. What do you usually do during your poetry lessons (lectures/seminars/tutorials)?

13. Do you enjoy what you usually do during your poetry lessons? Why/why not?

14. Is there anything else that you would you like to do during your poetry lessons (lectures/seminars/tutorials)?

15. Have you ever written any poetry? When? Why/why not?

16. Would you like to be given the opportunity to write poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus? Why/why not?

17. What has your teacher told you to do when writing an essay about Wilfred Owen's poetry…and about an unseen poem?

18. Personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet. Do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry? Why/why not?

19. What are you gaining out of your poetry lessons (lectures/seminars/tutorials)?

20. Have your poetry lessons at this school encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure? Why/why not?

21. Now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview. Do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson? Why/why not?

Thank you for participating in this interview.

Appendix 49 – Pilot Study: Semi-structured Interview Guide: Chief Examiner and Chair of Syllabus Panel for MC English

Thank you for choosing to participate in this interview. Even though I shall be recording this interview, please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports. The recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of this interview and the study itself in due course.

1. A number of literary critics and educational theorists claim that poetry is experiencing a crisis not only in our schools but also in the world beyond the classroom. What are your thoughts on this issue?

2. From your experience as an examiner and syllabus developer, do you think that MC English students enjoy poetry? Why/why not? [*ask the following follow-up questions only in case the interviewee queries the meaning of the term 'poetry'*] What do you understand by it? Do students enjoy this kind of poetry?

3. Why does poetry form part of the MC English syllabus and examination?

4. Should students be provided with the opportunity to write poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus? Why/why not?

5. In an appendix the 2013 syllabus explicitly states that 'Reference to literary critics and theorists does not make up part of the assessment criteria at Advanced Level' even though 'the examiners may choose to award evidence of broader reading within an author's work or across critique of that author, and/or reference to critics and theorists if these are discerningly and appropriately (rather than tokenistically) used' (MATSEC, 2010, p. 8). Why isn't the use of literary theory being promoted more strongly at post-secondary level by the MC English syllabus and examination?

6. Why are the poetry components assessed by means of an essay?

7. What do you think of alternative methods of assessing poetry, e.g. course work, poetry writing in response to published poems etc.? Do they have a place on the syllabus?

8. The 2013 syllabus states that 'examiners will be looking for appreciation as much as critique' (MATSEC, 2010, p. 5) when assessing candidates' literary

criticism essays on an unseen poem. How do you distinguish between the two terms and how does this distinction impinge on a candidate's essay?

9. In the 2013 syllabus the description of what students are expected to do in the literary criticism components seems to heavily underscore the significance of a stylistic approach to the way students read and write about an unseen poem. Why does the syllabus implicitly recommend this particular approach?

10. What value do other poetry teaching models have (i.e. content-based, personal growth, and sociocultural models)?

11. What teaching approach would you advise teachers to use when teaching poetry?

12. What value is a candidate's personal response to an unseen poem or selection of poems from a set text given during the marking process?

13. Are there any changes that you would like to see taking place in the teaching of poetry at post-secondary level?

14. Do markers use a published standard list of criteria when marking literary criticism poetry essays and essays on Wilfred Owen's poetry? [*the following follow-up question is to be asked only if the interviewee answers in the negative*] Should such a list be devised and made available to all relevant stakeholders by means of a detailed test manual?

15. What do you think is the impact of assessment on teachers' methodology and students' engagement with poetry?

16. Are there any changes that you would like to make to the way poetry is being assessed by the MC English examination?

17. Now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed during this interview. Do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience as an examiner and syllabus developer? Why/why not?

Thank you for participating in this interview.

Appendix 50 – Pilot Study: Focus Group Topic Guide: Students

Thank you for choosing to participate in this discussion. Even though I shall be recording our discussion, please rest assured that your identity will remain confidential and that your name will not appear in any written reports. The recording will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and you will get the opportunity of reading the transcript of our discussion and the study itself in due course.

1. Why is poetry on the syllabus? Should we study poetry? Why/why not?
2. What do you feel about your poetry lessons (lectures/seminars/tutorials)?
3. What do you like about your poetry lessons (lectures/seminars/tutorials)?
4. What don't you like about your poetry lessons (lectures/seminars/tutorials)?
5. What do you usually do during your poetry lessons (lectures/seminars/tutorials)?
6. Do you enjoy what you usually do during your poetry lessons? Why/why not?
7. Is there anything else that you would like to do during your poetry lessons (lectures/seminars/tutorials)?
8. Would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the MC English syllabus? Why/why not?
9. Personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet. Do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry? Why/why not?
10. Have your poetry lessons at Junior College encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure? Why/why not?
11. Now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to discuss it together as a group. Then I'd like you to tell me what you think about it in the light of what we've discussed. Do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson? Why/why not?

Thank you for participating in this discussion.

Appendix 51 – Pilot Study: Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Teacher AA

INTERVIEWER: which component do you prefer teaching most/

TEACHER: literature * I teach poetry * it's my main area * poetry second year A-level * last year I took on a bit of language and I can't say I prefer it to poetry

INTERVIEWER: you mentioned poetry * would that be your

TEACHER: it's my main area of teaching

INTERVIEWER: why do you prefer teaching poetry rather than something else/

TEACHER: * it's ** okay it's * the poetry I'm teaching involves a lot of background and it's background which is related to history and to the content of every poem * it's very raw * I think literature is alive * full of realism and it really interests them * especially the war poetry * the component I teach * I mean they start off by hating it or by being afraid but then gradually you see the change from beginning to end along the year * that's the main reason why it attracts me more than language * probably

INTERVIEWER: and what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

TEACHER: ** a variety * but historical novels fantasy thrillers * and also history but in relation to biographies * so I have quite an array of books

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading poetry/

TEACHER: yes yes * but particular poetry ** I'm more for sarcastic * sarcasm * I love poetry which conveys a certain amount of lived life * that's the kind of

INTERVIEWER: can you name some poets whose work you enjoy reading/

TEACHER: Plath is one of my favourites ** Byron is my you know * I love him

INTERVIEWER: why do we teach poetry/

TEACHER: okay *** okay * we teach poetry to ** convey the message or to show that lived life that experiences can be conveyed by someone else's words * it's not just * and the concept of empathy * that certain emotions that certain feelings can be understood * can be conveyed not just through words but also through the concept of rhythm * musicality * in the rhyme in the emotion

INTERVIEWER: should we continue teaching poetry in this day and age/

TEACHER: yes

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: why not/ [laughs] because if we don't * I mean * literature regenerates itself so if we stop teaching poetry we'd be sending the message listen this is dead this is not related to 2010 to 2011 * so no I think it should * it still should be * okay * the choice of * the choice of poetry maybe can be * even the choice of poetry for criticism * we tend to choose the modern poetry * at least that's what is in fashion * but we tend to forget that even the poetry of preceding eras * Victorian poetry for example is still relevant emotionally even though it's expressed in a different way * I think we're forgetting that so I think we should go a bit back

INTERVIEWER: do you think Advanced level English students enjoy reading poetry/

TEACHER: when it comes to crit * I have ** it depends on what kind of poetry you give them * if the theme * if the poem's subject is understood immediately then they're going to enjoy it * they're going to enjoy analysing it * how it's written in what ways * when it comes to my component which is Wilfred Owen * I think it's the perfect choice because it's again very straightforward * it's all about war so they can relate it even to today and what they watch on TV what they see * so yes I think yes quite

INTERVIEWER: * next question * what do you think of the set text for poetry/ Wilfred Owen in this case * and what do you think of its appropriateness for students' age and ability

TEACHER: I think it's quite a * a very good choice * I mean right now Keats is still on the * but I think considering the students * the fact that they do not read as much as we'd like them to * and there's something else * the subject matter is relevant today * the emotion the way the poetry is conveyed the theme of * physical pain psychological pain * this is something they can relate to * not just when it comes to the war sphere but even more so when it comes to every day life you are made up of certain experiences * even the structure of the poetry is not too taxing on them * the imagery is straight forward * it's basically metaphors and similes * but structured in a way which makes it easy for the students to understand what is being conveyed * I think they get it * again it's the way which is delivered which is important * that is you the teacher understand * and a lot of background is important as well * they need to know what happens in the historical context in World War One

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems in the literary criticism seminars/

TEACHER: ** you have lessons every week * for the tutorials those teachers who teach crit choose the poems

INTERVIEWER: and for the lessons themselves * do you teach literary criticism of poetry/

TEACHER: I do but during tutorial though because then they have specific during the week * they have two lessons during the week * the teachers themselves choose the poetry

INTERVIEWER: what do you think about that/

TEACHER: ** I * I * during one of my tutorials I'm going to try a little experiment next time * I'm going to ask one of the students to choose a poem so that we can criticise it together * I'm doing it because I want them * first of all we teach something which we have already worked on so they can see the process we go through ourselves when we analyse a poem so by means of a poem I haven't seen before * an unseen for me too * they'll probably * they might see the way I kind of deconstruct a poem to analyse it * so I think that's * that would be a good exercise in criticism * letting the students choose a poem so that it can be analysed in class together * so that would be a good * I was going to try and do that

INTERVIEWER: so now * which criteria should a teacher keep in mind when choosing a poem for a literary criticism seminar/

TEACHER: okay it depends on I think * on the students and the level and the time of year * if you're doing poetry with first years I think one should focus on separate * let's say you want to focus on imagery then you're going to choose a poem which is rich in imagery * or something else * when it comes to the second years then it's different * I think there should be a number of poems that they need to go through in preparation for the exam * so I think everything should be present

INTERVIEWER: what do you give most importance to when teaching poetry/

TEACHER: ** it depends * depends on which poem I'm teaching * for example there's a poem mental cases ** okay the imagery is of vital importance and the imagery is is the clue to what he is trying to tell you * to the meaning ** so if the the style is vital for the meaning the focus should be on the style but at the end of the day what the poem is about or what it's trying to convey is essential

INTERVIEWER: what approach do you use when teaching Wilfred Owen's poetry/ you've partly answered this question

TEACHER: I try to use films * little clips that have to do with the poems * such a shell shock or the physical pain that the soldiers would go through ** but also trying to get to the core of the poem the pain within the poetry * and also trying to to associate the images to that pain

INTERVIEWER: and have you ever taught literary criticism/

TEACHER: yes ** yes

INTERVIEWER: and which approach have you used when teaching the literary criticism of poetry/

TEACHER: I structure it * with first years doing separate elements * with second years I prefer digging into immediately * so what does that text give you/ okay/ * so we start off by which feelings you get * use those feelings * so if it's I hate it * okay let's try and put that into * why do you hate it/ * we start off from there * then I structure it * imagery diction symbolism * I structure it because at the end of the day they have to sit for an exam and write a structured essay * so kind of gearing them towards that is important

INTERVIEWER: and how do you usually conduct a tutorial based on an unseen poem/

TEACHER: ** okay * usually they have texts assigned so either work on the poem actually discussing it * then we see what we come up with and we kind of share * if they do it [laughs] that is the thing to consider * then we check on the points which are common * what they fear most is not getting it * and what I'm trying to teach them is not about getting it * analysing it in your own way is proving your point * when it comes to crit it's like you are a lawyer and you need to make a case * to prove it * and how do you prove it/ by going back to your work and they seem to forget their work * I mean you know they just write a sentence without going back to the poem

INTERVIEWER: what do you usually ask your students to do during a poetry lesson/ a lesson on Wilfred Owen

TEACHER: okay ** so basically first they read the poem on their own * then I read it myself * then I ask them what they think it's about what the gist is and I get feedback there * and usually the discussion takes up quite a lot of time and we have to stop that * and you start analysing the poem * but I elicit a lot * I use Owen as a means of teaching criticism killing two birds with one stone * it's not just Owen * it's also criticism * so we're criticising the poem * I also ask them to give me their

own opinion * okay/ is this poem similar to the one we read two weeks ago * so comparison

INTERVIEWER: are there any changes that you would like to make to the way you teach poetry/

TEACHER: this year I started doing it a bit more technological * visual aids * we have recordings * material which we can use * that's a change I have adopted this year ** but I'll probably find something else * and background * background * I'm trying to keep in mind what questions they ask * last week they asked me about different guns they used * so I think I need to give more importance to background

INTERVIEWER: should students be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

TEACHER: yes

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: because * by actually doing the work themselves trying * or getting into * you know the different kinds of poetry * when it comes to analysing and looking at other poetry * they'll understand it more

INTERVIEWER: does literary theory have a part to play during poetry lessons/

TEACHER: * okay * at times yes * yes definitely

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: because * it can be helpful when it comes to explaining certain concepts in poetry

INTERVIEWER: do you have any reservations about the role of literary theory during poetry lessons/

TEACHER: well maybe we could introduce it a bit more * give them a bit more * a stronger basis in it * I think at this point they are so scared of writing the essay that the literary theory we do in the first year is so basic * maybe we could go a bit more into certain aspects of it

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea of allowing students to experience poetry by means of other media not just the printed page/ you've talked about this already

TEACHER: yes * I mean it's 2010 * it's necessary

INTERVIEWER: what do you ask your students to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

TEACHER: what do I ask them to do/

INTERVIEWER: what to include in it how to structure it and so on

TEACHER: obviously the first thing you have to do is look at what's being expected of them * secondly I tell them that they have to hold an argument * you have to tell the examiner listen I know that Wilfred Owen had a practical objective for writing his poetry * so the first thing you have to do is find your point and choose your poems * the poems you're going to deal with and I tell them focus on three at most four to work * again then another important thing they're expected to do is quote * the concept of quotes * again relevance there * again you're trying to prove a point * to prove an argument so you to quote to prove that * so you try to focus on that as well

INTERVIEWER: and what do you ask them to do when writing an essay on an unseen poem/

TEACHER: okay * structure is the first thing * plan it * and again planning is essay writing and we're not giving them enough of that I think * planning is very individual * so the first thing is you look at the rubric * what is being asked of you * and then try and focus on different elements * distinguish between theme and structure

INTERVIEWER: what role should the students' personal response play in their essays/

TEACHER: ** I think it should be there but not emphasised too strongly

INTERVIEWER: meaning

TEACHER: meaning that it should be conveyed through the analysis of the poem not by means of the I think * I think that the I think should be eliminated * they don't have to include it * their opinion should be expressed through their analysis

INTERVIEWER: what do you think about the way MATSEC assesses poetry/

TEACHER: * meaning the unseen or the/

INTERVIEWER: both * both Owen and unseen poems

TEACHER: the choice of the

INTERVIEWER: you can even talk about the essay format methods of assessment

TEACHER: okay when it comes to Owen * we * basically if they are given a number of poems which can be structured into different themes this would help students * maybe structuring them in different themes would help the students * categories * at this point they need a certain kind of tangibility * when it comes to the unseen for

teachers it's not clear what marking scheme MATSEC is using * how many marks for this and how many marks for this

INTERVIEWER: what about the essay format/

TEACHER: it encompasses everything * it does *** at times the word limit is a problem * maybe the structure could be structured better

INTERVIEWER: what I mean is the essay format as a means of assessing poetry

TEACHER: whether it should be in question form/ * okay *** no I think I prefer this kind of format rather than any other * the essay has the advantage of giving students more space to be creative

INTERVIEWER: or coursework/

TEACHER: well yes definitely * in the exam you're limited and it depends on whatever * a number of factors * so I'm for that totally

INTERVIEWER: are there any changes that you would like to see to the way that poetry is being assessed by MATSEC/

TEACHER: ** as in both unseen and Wilfred Owen/

INTERVIEWER: yes

TEACHER: well clear criteria so that we know where we stand

INTERVIEWER: now the final question * I'd like you to read this poem and keeping in mind what we've been discussing tell me whether it describes your experience during a poetry lesson

TEACHER: [reads poem] exactly! * as in since we're gearing them towards an exam we're losing the beauty of actually reading poetry * yes

INTERVIEWER: do your students behave in that way/

TEACHER: yes because since they don't know what they're going to be facing especially in the unseen they're afraid of it * and again they're not used to reading it * it's one of the repercussions of having an unseen text

INTERVIEWER: do they have the same reaction to Wilfred Owen/

TEACHER: ** no * at the beginning they're in awe of the concept of war poetry but I start with simpler poetry * Dulce * Anthem * so that they get a feel for it then we go on to the more complicated poetry * the show strange meeting * and they are * at the end * they look forward to it * and even though it's war poetry and the gist is always the same they enjoy it

INTERVIEWER: so you don't think that they're beating it with a hose to find out what it really means/

TEACHER: sometimes I do explain to them listen this is how we are interpreting the poem * Owen might have meant something else * or how I have interpreted it * but there are other options * other interpretations which I accept because they are arguable and they make sense * so that's one way in which I tell them that certain interpretations * if you have proof enough then yes

INTERVIEWER: thank you very much for taking part in this interview

Appendix 52 – Pilot Study: Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Teacher BB

INTERVIEWER: which component do you prefer teaching most/

TEACHER: literary criticism

INTERVIEWER: and why/

TEACHER: ** because it provides students with a certain breadth when it comes to what they do * and even the teacher * there is a certain freedom * you don't have to stick to one text you don't have to stick to one historical epoch you don't have to focus on one style

INTERVIEWER: do you prefer teaching the literary criticism of poetry or that of prose/ do you have a preference/

TEACHER: both I would say both

INTERVIEWER: what sort of material do you prefer reading for personal pleasure/

TEACHER: ** that's a very tough one * I read more or less everything depending on the mood * I'm a very moody person which is not a disadvantage but is actually an advantage * what I tend to do is buy books of all sorts let them lie on bookshelves here and there and then depending on the mood I pick them up and read them

INTERVIEWER: and do you enjoy reading poetry/

TEACHER: yes very much so yes * once again depending on my mood * I usually buy modern poetry in magazines

INTERVIEWER: can you name any poets that you particularly enjoy reading/

TEACHER: to be honest the poets that I go back to time and time again is Sylvia Plath because I think she grows with you especially if you're a woman * when I was a teenager I used to understand her in one way now I understand her differently * she has grown with me * and I also like Seamus Heaney very much * and anyone I happen to like when I spot their work in literary reviews or whatever

INTERVIEWER: why do we teach poetry/

TEACHER: ** because poetry has the ability and this is something that we saw in Malta over the past few weeks when Micallef did his readings of Dante for example * poetry can say things which are real about human nature * after all this is what Shelley meant when he said that poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world * I mean a poet can say something in words that are slightly abstruse but * they might not necessarily be abstruse because sometimes they're not * but I think

that they couldn't be said in ordinary prose * they couldn't be said by people who do not have the formation of a poet

INTERVIEWER: should we continue teaching poetry in this day and age/

TEACHER: yes we should

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: yes we should because there is a lot of wealth even from the point of view of language * when our students go to university even when they study things like speech therapy and so on * they analyse language as it's used in different spheres of human life * poetry in the course of the ages is one of the embodiments of human experience * once a teacher of mine told us that there is something atavistic in human nature which dictates that certain important things ought to be written in poetry and according to him poetry is a more natural form of expression from the literary view point than prose * that is what he said

INTERVIEWER: do Advanced level English students enjoy reading poetry/

TEACHER: yes * I think that if it's presented to them in a particular context they do * I don't think there's a particularly strong resistance to poetry amongst my students * occasionally you have resistance to certain kinds of poetry * you find students who tell you but this doesn't rhyme so it can't be good can it/ you know/ you get that sort of attitude sometimes * you also get students who are put off by older poetry by old vocabulary which they don't see relevant to them * you do get students who object to these things but not to poetry in general no

INTERVIEWER: so in your opinion the majority of students enjoy reading poetry/

TEACHER: yes yes * I mean they wouldn't * this is something which unfortunately happens to people like us too * it's much easier to read prose than poetry * you know/ they wouldn't do it on their own or for pleasure

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the set text for poetry/ that is Wilfred Owen

TEACHER: ** I would certainly have gone for Keats rather than Owen because it is less dreary * I mean spending an entire year talking about trenches and gas and gas masks and people being asphyxiated and people being * losing their limbs and things of the sort * whereas Keats has a somewhat wider range of emotion

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the appropriateness of Wilfred Owen for students of this age and ability/

TEACHER: for students of this age it is extremely appropriate for the simple reason that they should learn how to think about war maturely you know/ so I think it does help * but if I had the choice I would still opt for Keats

INTERVIEWER: who chooses the poems for the literary criticism seminars/

TEACHER: I do I do generally * but I also take suggestions from the students * for example I recently had a student who told me that he would like to do some poems by Philip Larkin and I said okay over the Christmas holidays I'll prepare something and then we'll discuss it next year * so I take suggestions from the students too * it's always good to do that I find * I mean when we're open to

INTERVIEWER: what kind of criteria do you use when choosing poems for literary criticism seminars/

TEACHER: ** I normally try to make the text that I choose representative of certain styles and periods * I think that that's important and I think that * for example when I was a student at sixth form I had teachers who weren't really adventurous when it came to the choice of texts so that we ended up going to university without having ever read a number of important authors * so I don't think that that is good

INTERVIEWER: so your criteria when choosing poems for literary criticism

TEACHER: I have a number of things that I want to introduce my students to * such as the notion of point of view * the notion of a first person narrator * things like the unreliable narrator * certain criteria that our students have to know prior to taking the examination * I think those are the things that I take into consideration * I try to give them a sort of cross-section of literature across different historical periods * I choose texts that highlight certain techniques

INTERVIEWER: do you encourage students to bring in any poems that they would like to discuss with the rest of the class/

TEACHER: yes of course

INTERVIEWER: why do you feel that this is important/

TEACHER: because I think that by giving them * by giving them the opportunity to read things that are meaningful to them and sharing them with others * I mean that is the whole point of literature * literature has to make part of the rest of society * literature is something based on language and as literary critics have revealed have shown language is something which makes sense because it's shared

INTERVIEWER: what do you give most importance to when teaching poetry/

TEACHER: ** I give most importance to * at this level * to whether they can first of all extrapolate the theme from the text * because the theme is something which is not stated clearly by the writer * the theme and also to get the students to comment on the way the text is written in relation to the theme * this is the question I always try to make them ask * if this is the theme he wanted to elaborate on why did he use this style/ I'm convinced that if manage to make our students ask these questions at this level then at university level they will have the tools to begin doing more in-depth analyses of the text but I think at this point it is very important for them to ask themselves what is the style in which it is written/ why did he have to use these words/ ** I think that it's very important to give them some time to think on their own * over the years I've discovered that it can be very counterproductive for the teacher to talk too much you know/ I think that it's always best to allow them to chat amongst themselves to come up with ideas on their own because in that way they can share ideas with each other * and I try to keep my own comments for the last so that in that way you can discover what they know

INTERVIEWER: what approach do you use when teaching Wilfred Owen's poetry/ do you teach Wilfred Owen/

TEACHER: I teach Owen during tutorials * if I had to prepare them for an essay what I normally do is ask them to copy down the title and then do a brainstorming session with them * I see what they remember * my job is that of trying to help them differentiate between the poems to identify the different images to make distinctions between the styles * that sort of thing

INTERVIEWER: I know that you've partly answered this question but what approach do you use when teaching the literary criticism of poetry/

TEACHER: ** it depends because at the beginning of the year the lessons tend to be a little bit teacher-centred which is not ideal however they have to be teacher-centred because I have to make sure that certain things have been covered * so I have to go over certain notions * figures of speech * to go over the kind of style in which the essay ought to be written * I give them hints about the ways in which they can put forward their ideas rather than saying I think at the beginning of every sentence * things like the formality that is required by the examination * but then from round about the middle of November onwards I give them practical work * I present them with a poem I give them time to read it and then I ask them which period of time do you think this poem was written in/ why/ I start asking everyone and one good

approach is that of not limiting oneself to the highfliers only * I try to give the impression that * the atmosphere rather than the impression that everyone has a right to their opinion and that no one is going to make fun of anybody else * I think that that works * during the first two weeks they are somewhat diffident but then slowly they stop being so

INTERVIEWER: how do you usually conduct a tutorial based on an unseen poem/

TEACHER: well normally the tutorial is a bit different because I leave them the tutorial text at the photocopier and they are expected to pick up a copy and read it at home and find the meaning of any difficult words in the context * they normally do that * then I have a five minute session in which they all give their opinion about what they would have read or what they think is the meaning and then I pay attention to particular elements of diction and I tell them but how does this relate to what you have said/ or how does this explicate the notion that you have come up with and you know you sort of do it as a jigsaw puzzle * I ask them to extrapolate the theme * but I think that it's always important for the teacher to let them do it on their own* the teacher has the job of trying to point them in the right direction because after all in the exam they're going to be on their own so I can't just tell them listen this is what the poem means what the words mean * I mean it would be a bit easier but it would be useless as an exam preparation exercise

INTERVIEWER: what do you usually ask your students to do during a poetry lesson/

TEACHER: I think it depends on the poem itself * I wouldn't ask them to do the same kind of things with a demanding poem as with a poem where the diction is much more easy to understand * it depends on the poem I think

INTERVIEWER: are there any changes that you would like to make to the way you teach poetry/

TEACHER: I think one always has to be open to change * sometimes all it takes is watching a TV programme and you see something that you've never done before

INTERVIEWER: and do you find that you change your methods year in year out/

TEACHER: yes I do * for example in the past when I began teaching I didn't use to * allow my students to take over parts of the lesson as much as I do now but over the years I've realised that unless I let them do that * I mean they wouldn't be properly prepared for the examination * and that is one problem we have in Malta * there is no training available * we ought to have more training available for people who teach at sixth form level

INTERVIEWER: should students be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/

TEACHER: ** yes * yes I think that they should

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: because I think that by writing poetry they would perhaps * not perhaps certainly * come into closer contact with the procedures that enter into the writing of poetry * I think that that would be a very good idea actually * but for me to be able to do that I would have to be trained and I've never received training of that sort * I wouldn't have any problem with doing it actually * but I think the trend seems to be going in that direction * I mean even people who are experts in language * for example recently I was reading Jim Scrivener's book *Learning Teaching* and he believes that you teach someone to do something by giving him a model and letting him do it * and I don't see why that shouldn't be the case with poetry * but for that to happen the lecture session has to be a little bit longer * and you could have visiting poets * in Malta we do have poets who could visit schools and do a workshop with students * it can be done

INTERVIEWER: does literary theory have a part to play during poetry lessons/

TEACHER: yes definitely!

INTERVIEWER: why/

TEACHER: definitely! * definitely! * definitely! in fact over the years I've been including literary theory without mentioning the names of the theory or the theorist more and more * I began as a teacher many years ago thinking that perhaps it would be too much for my students but then I realised that I couldn't run away from it * it's very important so important * for example this problem we have in the Maltese educational system where lessons are teacher-led and teacher-centred * you know they come to sixth form with the notion that words have fixed meanings and no one would have told them the meaning of connotation or the difference between connotation and denotation * we can't run away from theory I think

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea of allowing students to experience poetry by means of other media not just the printed page/

TEACHER: ** you mean audio books/

INTERVIEWER: audio recordings visual media

TEACHER: yes I'm in full agreement with that

INTERVIEWER: do you actually do this/

TEACHER: to be honest I've never done it * with the exception of a reading by Ted Hughes of one of T. S. Eliots's *Four Quartets* * the students enjoyed it they enjoyed it a lot * I did it last year and I intend to do it this year as well * but I know for sure that the teachers in charge of teaching Wilfred Owen show them videos and play recordings by Kenneth Branagh * so I think that that's really interesting * the students are responding very well to this * yes they do respond they do

INTERVIEWER: what do you ask your students to do when writing an essay on Wilfred Owen's poetry/

TEACHER: in what sense/

INTERVIEWER: what do you ask them to include in their essay/ what approach to adopt

TEACHER: ** well it depends on the title * I mean one thing that I always emphasise apart from the necessity of formality of expression is that they always stick to the title * that they don't go off at a tangent * that the poems they mention are really relevant to what they have been asked to write about in the title * they need to relate the content of the poem to the title of the essay * I always tell them to highlight the key words and to make sure to go back to them all the time while writing the essay * to make sure that you're answering what you're being asked to write about

INTERVIEWER: and with regards to an essay on an unseen poem/

TEACHER: well with an essay on an unseen poem * first of all I always tell them to pay attention to what the question is because in spite of the fact that we have the usual standard question there might be slight changes from time to time * and apart from that you have to make sure to structure the essay in such a way that you discuss all the important aspects of the text * so one has to look at the text see what content it has and adapt one's approach to the content

INTERVIEWER: what role should a students' personal response play in an essay/

TEACHER: I think it is important * I'm convinced that the examiner looks for a certain personal touch in the work of a student writing an unseen literary criticism essay * I always tell my students do not make your essay sound or feel robotic because he wants to see your personal response * but then try not to go off at a tangent * I mean you can't become so subjective as to skew the message the meaning of the text in a totally idiotic fashion * one has to more or less stick to what the text is

saying * one has to express oneself in a manner which is acceptable within the context of the examination

INTERVIEWER: what do you think about the way MATSEC assesses poetry/

TEACHER: ** to be honest with you until last year we had * now I think it's actually going to be published the marking scheme that is * but for a number of years we had a big issue with MATSEC because teachers had no access to the marking scheme * now it seems that it's going to be published or it will be * I don't really have anything negative to say on the issue of MATSEC vis-à-vis the fairness of assessing A-level students * apart from the fact that occasionally there have been one or two mistakes ** as regards the way MATSEC assesses poetry until we have the marking scheme I can't make specific comments because it is still a bit of a mystery * an unknown country as it were

INTERVIEWER: are there any changes however that you would like to see to the way that poetry is being assessed by MATSEC/ for example the essay format

TEACHER: a past colleague of mine who is now retired * I'm referring to him because he has much more experience than me * was of the opinion that to ask students to write an essay about a text they've never seen before is like throwing them into the middle of the Mediterranean and asking them to swim to Malta * you know/ that sort of thing * and he was an experienced teacher of English who had seen many generations of students

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think of this idea/

TEACHER: ** I think I think that * when I was a student myself we used to sit for Oxford A-levels and there was a mixture of long pieces of writing and short questions * there was a mixture * to a certain extent I think we had an easier time with it because we'd have a text and we'd have a number of questions to answer about the text and then we had to write two paragraphs * for example one about diction and one about theme * that is the way it used be done by Oxford * when MATSEC started to set papers to my knowledge it's always been an essay that the students have been required to write * we could go back to students writing both paragraph-like answers and shorter answers * I don't think I would have any problems with that

INTERVIEWER: the last thing that I'd like you to do is * could you read this poem and keeping in mind what we've been discussing tell me whether it describes your experience during a poetry lesson/

TEACHER: [reads poem] oh well * I love the first part * the final two stanzas I don't know whether you'd agree with me but they seem to be referring to secondary school students rather than sixth formers * to be honest when I taught in secondary school I found that attitude * you know/ miss what does it mean/ A-level second year students don't always give you this response do they/ I mean the curious ones don't want the teacher to give her own definition her own interpretation for them to write down * this is a feeling I definitely used to get when I taught poetry in secondary schools * miss tell us what it means so that we can put it down * they don't look at the poem but they look at you and they want to memorise what you are saying so that they can go and write it in the exam

INTERVIEWER: but why does this attitude suddenly change once they enter sixth form/

TEACHER: ** well I'm lucky I must say because my second year A-level students come to class with a certain curiosity and I think that curiosity is essential * I think you always have five to six students who are there to memorise what you're saying so that they can go and replicate it in the exam irrespective of whether it fits the question or not * I mean you always get them * I mean even at the end of the year you occasionally get students who give you back what you would have given them irrespective of whether it fits the context ** the reason why it changes at sixth form is perhaps because at sixth form they are conscious that they are studying the subject because they want to * whereas even when I used to teach in what is perhaps the best girls' junior lyceum in Malta you had about 30% of the class who hated the fact that they had to study literature that they were forced to do so * with A-level students if the teacher is sly enough to choose texts which interest the students which aren't very conformist * for example you noticed when you observed the lesson last week * I took those texts because you were coming because I wasn't planning on doing those texts but I said let me do them because I want to be a little interactive and I want to give them an opportunity to speak on their own * the number of students who objected to the Wordsworth text and said that it's so conformist and it's so mellifluous and silly which it is from a certain point of view * you know/ they were put off they wanted to resist the text * when I've chosen texts which have been a little less conformist I think that that tends to involve them a bit more

INTERVIEWER: thank you very much for taking part in this interview

Appendix 53 – Pilot Study: Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Teacher CC

INTERVIEWER: so what do you think/ should I show them the video first or hand them the poem/ do you think it's an effective way of gauging their views about the assessment and teaching of poetry/

TEACHER: alright * first of all any * addition or anything you're going to use in a lesson * will be effective or equally effective depending on what you need to achieve out of it and * what's coming before it or after it so for example if you want to simply start with the video and elicit any ideas and then bring them down to the actual written poem then that could be effective for a particular reason * you may for example obviously ask them to comment on the poem and then show them the video as an artistic or graphic representation of that so I don't think there's a better way or a worst way of doing it * it all depends on what you want to achieve from using it at that particular point in the lesson

INTERVIEWER: in terms of helping them to understand the poem and then ask them whether this describes their experience of poetry lessons * my aim is to help them talk about the teaching and assessment of poetry * their own experience of it so is the film helping them to do that or not

TEACHER: alright okay * at one point you asked me whether it would help them understand the poem * again this would depend on the level of the students that would be reading this * I would suppose that if you're doing this with a secondary school

INTERVIEWER: with A-level students

TEACHER: with A-level students * I don't think they need anything to understand this poem because the language and the ideas behind it shouldn't be beyond them so I don't think they actually need the video to understand the poem * I think that the language of the video is also not complex enough so that even without a text in front of you I think just seeing the video should give a very clear idea of what the message of the video is so I don't think you need the video or the film to understand the poem or in any way you actually need the written poem to understand what the video is trying to suggest * I don't think it's beyond an A-level student

INTERVIEWER: and if I had to use both which order would you suggest in terms of procedure/

TEACHER: I think ** I think I would first of all actually start by asking them about their experience with poetry

INTERVIEWER: this obviously is going to come at the end of an entire interview about the teaching and learning of poetry

TEACHER: okay * so I wouldn't know what would have come before it but I don't know whether it will still be a situation where you will have to elicit ideas out of them or whether you may start with a kind of bringing of ideas that they would have already suggested * let us assume that this kind of paraphrasing of ideas has happened * I think I would prefer to show them the video and probably give them the printed poem at the end as something to take away with them ** because I think the video still leaves room for discussion

INTERVIEWER: and do you think that the video as it was ultimately put together detracts from the poem or does it divert attention from what the poet is trying to say/

TEACHER: I think it picks on the right points of the poem * I think it's good * I think it's good actually

INTERVIEWER: do you think it would act as a point of entry into the poem/ would it facilitate understanding/

TEACHER: I think I've already answered that * no I don't think that you need that in order for them to understand the poem* I don't think the poem actually needs that much to be understood but I think that it's still a very interesting graphic way of translating what is in the poem * I don't think you need the poem * an A-level student doesn't need that video to understand it * I think a student would understand this poem without any kind of explanation

INTERVIEWER: so the video is embellishing the whole experience of reading the poem/ am I getting you right/

TEACHER: yes! I don't think * I mean if I had to give this poem to an A-level class I would assume that it is slightly easy for them * I don't think that it's challenging to understand either the language or the syntax or the ideas behind it * it's simply a brief intelligent way of probably bringing together what their experience of poetry is but I don't think there's anything beyond them * I think it might strike a good chord if that happens to be their experience but I don't think it's beyond them

INTERVIEWER: so the bottom line is would you suggest using the video as a means of gathering data/

TEACHER: yes of course yes because * if anything it moves away from limiting poetry to the printed word and presents them with the spoken word * and it allows another kind of medium of interpreting an artistic expression

INTERVIEWER: thank you * that's it

Appendix 54 – Pilot Study: Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Teacher DD

INTERVIEWER: do you think I should show students the video first or hand them the poem/ do you think it's an effective way of gauging their views about the assessment and teaching of poetry/

TEACHER: alright alright alright * my reaction is that sort of the video that I followed sort of tried to ** bring out the idea of the way language is used creatively even the way he gave sort of descriptions like press an ear against its hive drop a mouse into a poem * sort of appreciating not just the sound but the mental images * however he's also sort of criticising the kind of * what you might call a rigid traditional approach * of sort of looking at poetry appreciation as if it was a sort of torture by means of a hosepipe and tie it down sort of limiting it * I think that the * actually watching the video actually helped me to understand this better * now I don't know whether that's what students will feel

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think of the idea of showing the video before asking the students to read the poem/ what works best in your opinion/ with lecturers and with students/

TEACHER: ** I think I would show them the video clip first * it sort of warms them up * even the idea of having some visual material and looking at the effect of this idea of sort of ** something which restricts limits understanding * the water which actually erases everything * I think I would it first that one and then give them the poem

INTERVIEWER: and do you feel that the video is sort of constraining your interpretation of the poem/

TEACHER: rather than constraining I think it would assist * it would assist * it would support * it would provide me with the necessary sort of warming up to actually then move into the words

INTERVIEWER: thanks * thank you

Appendix 55 – Pilot Study: Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Teacher EE

INTERVIEWER: do you think I should show students the video first or hand them the poem/ do you think it's an effective way of gauging their views about the assessment and teaching of poetry/

TEACHER: ** I think we need to keep in mind * that the video is much simpler than the poem * it doesn't do full justice to the many layers of this poem and I think students wouldn't have any problem with understand this video * so if I had to use this * use this video I would make sure to ask them to point out the similarities and differences between the video and the * printed poem * students I think will be able to identify much more in the printed poem * as I've said the video is very simple

INTERVIEWER: and what should I do/ show the video first or the give them a copy of the poem/

TEACHER: definitely the video * they're primarily visual individuals so * so showing them the video first would be much better but but you could also do something else * show them the video * give them the poem then then * give them the poem then show them the video again * I think they need to watch it more than once to be able to analyse the differences between the video and the poem ** and the similarities

INTERVIEWER: do you think that the video constrains one's interpretation of the poem/

TEACHER: not at all * it's actually a very simple video simple interpretation and it manages to capture the gist of the poem very well

INTERVIEWER: thanks very much

Appendix 56 – Pilot Study: Semi-structured Interview Transcript: Student

INTERVIEWER: which lessons do you like most out of your entire English course/

STUDENT: within the syllabus/

INTERVIEWER: within the English A-level course you're doing here * which lessons interest you most/

STUDENT: criticism * *King Lear* * I like *King Lear* a lot ** and poetry * I like that a lot too * Wilfred Owen * it's deep * it's about real suffering * something which I haven't experience and Owen has obviously experienced

INTERVIEWER: so you like these lessons for their content/

STUDENT: yes mostly

INTERVIEWER: what about the way the lesson is delivered by the teacher and so on/ * do you have any preferences/

STUDENT: well you know you can have a preference for a particular teacher who does something particular * for example my criticism teacher gives a lot of importance to the diction ** a teacher can either make you feel in love with a subject or not * especially if you don't know anything about it ** poetry as well * poetry is more about reading and understanding what it means rather than what the teacher has to say about it because ** it's satisfactory you know

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy reading listening to or writing poetry/

STUDENT: poetry I * like to read it although sometimes I don't understand it a lot especially when the words are very complicated * and yes I do like writing a bit of poetry myself

INTERVIEWER: why do you actually write poetry/

STUDENT: I don't know * it's perhaps because I sometimes want to describe my feelings and stuff * sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night I can't sleep and all of a sudden something comes into my head * I wouldn't imagine anyone wanting to read them * I have no idea * they just pop in and I just you know start writing something down and then you know it just takes shape

INTERVIEWER: and how long have you been writing poetry/

STUDENT: * I think since form 2 * I had a very good English teacher * she loved me very much and * she used to read us poetry

INTERVIEWER: and did this teacher encourage you to write poetry/

STUDENT: yes! she also used to ask us to read them out in front of the whole class

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think of the idea of teachers * here at this school encouraging students to write poetry as part of the syllabus/

STUDENT: ** not really as part of the syllabus no * unfortunately it's all about structured essays * if you have a *King Lear* essay as I'm doing right now it's about structure * if you have poetry it's about structure * it's all about structure * you have a topic and you have to write certain things that they are looking for * it's not about your feelings it's not about expressing your opinions

INTERVIEWER: but would you like that to happen/ would you like to be encouraged to write poetry here at school/

STUDENT: ** well unfortunately not everyone is really capable of writing poetry * I mean there are differences between poems * if you're writing a poem because you have to do it you'd say oh my god how am I going to manage this * so it could be optional but I wouldn't push on the students

INTERVIEWER: so you wouldn't make it part of the syllabus/

STUDENT: no because the fact that I like it doesn't mean that everyone is good at it * we're studying English * English is about the depth of the language the appreciation of poetry * not writing only

INTERVIEWER: ok now * how important is poetry to you/ you've partly answered this question but how important is it to you/ as a person and as a student

STUDENT: I don't know *** poetry is * a very personal thing * for example people who write music and music is actually poetry * it's not just boom boom boom * it could be but a part of poetry is music * sometimes okay * there are certain feelings about poetry that even though you might say I don't like to read poetry actually we do like it because we like listening to music and so we like it * the lyrics can say so many things * yes people do like poetry

INTERVIEWER: now what kind of importance should poetry be given in our society/

STUDENT: ** well * society or people learning English/

INTERVIEWER: no I mean as a society in general * our culture

STUDENT: well I believe that poetry is art and it should be part of our culture because it reflects our culture so yes I think it should be given a certain amount of importance

INTERVIEWER: do you like all or any of Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: Wilfred Owen * as I said before I like the fact that he described what he saw and his inner feelings about it * I think they're very deep * and I think he helped me to experience something that I would never have experienced * that first world war shooting and trenches ** as I said before I do like him * quite a lot

INTERVIEWER: do you like all or any of the poems you read during your literary criticism poetry seminars or lessons/

STUDENT: as in criticism/

INTERVIEWER: yes

STUDENT: ** well I don't always agree with everything but * you know yes

INTERVIEWER: when you say you don't agree with everything what do you mean/

STUDENT: for example when we read poetry prose we don't always agree with the writer's perspective you know * but still it's interesting to see the way he sees things * for example a recent one that we did was about how the writer in chaos and havoc sees something musical * in actual life I don't agree but the way he explains that it's musical * the idea of it being musical is very interesting

INTERVIEWER: and who chooses the poems for you poetry criticism lessons/

STUDENT: I presume it's my teacher

INTERVIEWER: do you always like the poems that are chosen for you/

STUDENT: * you mean Wilfred Owen/

INTERVIEWER: no the ones for literary criticism

STUDENT: * I don't know * sometimes I wish that we have older poems * okay it's more difficult but you'll have an experience of other things * for example even Keats

INTERVIEWER: what do you think of the idea that students can actually suggest poems that can be read and discussed in class/

STUDENT: if they've read them and they like them then why not * I think it is yes a good idea

INTERVIEWER: now what about the poems that you are asked to write about for your tutorials * have you done any tutorials based on poetry/

STUDENT: not yet

INTERVIEWER: not yet okay so let's skip that question * now do you enjoy studying poetry/

STUDENT: studying poetry * well there's the bad thing that you have to memorise everything especially quotations and stuff like that * I can't remember anything so

far * but * the actual knowledge that you could * but that you either know it or you don't

INTERVIEWER: if I say poetry lesson to you what comes to mind/ if I say that phrase what comes to mind/

STUDENT: Wilfred Owen * studying Owen's poetry

INTERVIEWER: anything else/ when you hear this phrase poetry lesson * what comes to mind/

STUDENT: First World War * it has to be interesting * I couldn't imagine reading something boring

INTERVIEWER: so the topic has to interest you basically/

STUDENT: yes * I like a subject that interests me and a teacher that makes me feel that I want to read more about it

INTERVIEWER: what do you mean by that/ how can a teacher do that/

STUDENT: for example I had a very bad teacher last year and he taught me when I was doing second year and now I'm doing second year again and I don't like it * the way he teaches the subject makes me feel bored * I don't feel the inspiration * a teacher can inspire you in many ways you know * the way he teaches * how interesting he makes the lesson * I don't know * certain little details that keep you alert

INTERVIEWER: is there anything that you like about your poetry lessons/ and by this I mean Wilfred Owen lectures literary criticism seminars any tutorials on poetry * is there anything you like about them/

STUDENT: about poetry/

INTERVIEWER: about poetry lessons/

STUDENT: about poetry lessons * well criticism I really like because you read a poem and you get this certain perspective and you're not sure what it means * then you start dealing with the lines word by word in order to understand what he means by it * and I like that a lot * to appreciate the diction what he means by certain words * I like these things a lot

INTERVIEWER: and is there anything that you don't like * about your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: well the fact that eventually it's not about appreciating poetry but that it's part of your exam * unfortunately in our society a poetry exam is structured and they are looking for certain things not about expressing your views

INTERVIEWER: and would you like to do that if you had the opportunity/

STUDENT: yes! because art cannot be really talked about in just one way * everyone has to say what he thinks about it * and the fact that you base your essay only on what somebody else is saying

INTERVIEWER: by somebody else you mean

STUDENT: critics

INTERVIEWER: and are you encouraged to present your point of view your perspective your personal response in an essay/

STUDENT: in an essay no * not really no

INTERVIEWER: in class/

STUDENT: in class for poetry we're short of time so we can't really do so * but in criticism yes * she does ask us * read this and think about it and what you think it means

INTERVIEWER: and would you say that this is what you mostly do during the lesson/ or is it a small part of it/

STUDENT: it's balanced actually * she asks questions and receives our answers and bases what she has written in order to explain the poem on what we say * so what she writes on the board is partly what we come up with

INTERVIEWER: and what do you usually do during your poetry lessons/ so could you describe what you usually do during a lecture and then what you usually do during a literary criticism poetry seminar/ could you describe the things that you do/

STUDENT: poetry there are slides * she tries to show us a video clip about shell shock the trenches and so on * information about the background of the first world war * but it is reading writing and understanding * we focus on personification rhyme alliteration ** criticism it's more liberal free * we read the poem and we start giving our opinion and she writes notes on the board * but really short you know just the gist of it * and for tutorials * not poetry because we haven't done any on that yet * we bring our essays and give it to her * she corrects it and then sort of criticises our work

INTERVIEWER: so do you discuss it in class/

STUDENT: we do discuss after she corrects it yes

INTERVIEWER: do you enjoy what you usually do during your poetry lessons/ do you personally enjoy what you usually do/

STUDENT: I wish we had more time

INTERVIEWER: to do what/

STUDENT: to emphasise one particular poem for example * more time to elaborate on it * talk more about it and even maybe to gather more information more background

INTERVIEWER: is there anything else that you would like to do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: *** don't know

INTERVIEWER: are there any suggestions that you would like to make/ any changes that you would like to see during your poetry lessons

STUDENT: well I don't know really * it's so structured really * read the poem read the notes write the essay * understand it

INTERVIEWER: and are you happy with that/

STUDENT: as I told you before I wish we had more time because spending more time on the poem you know * understanding it * saying what we think about it * perhaps even more videos and slides

INTERVIEWER: and so by means of this time that you'd like to have * what would you like to do in it/

STUDENT: understanding it * saying what it means

INTERVIEWER: and so would you like to have more time for the teacher to explain what is going on for you to express what you think is going on in the poem/

STUDENT: I think more to explain what is going on in the poem * it is important to have as much information as possible

INTERVIEWER: why do you think that's important/

STUDENT: even you essays will be richer * you'll go that extra mile you know to impress the examiner * even for your own self knowledge * the most important thing for me is self knowledge * yes right now it's all about the A-level that I have ** but I do pay importance to this kind of knowledge * the fact that I know

INTERVIEWER: would you like to be given the opportunity to write poetry as part of the Advanced English syllabus/ in your opinion in relation to this was that you're not

STUDENT: I don't know altogether because really * because yes I like poetry but then again you need the inspiration * when you're writing a structured essay it's just an essay * but when it comes to a poem you have to be inspired to know what to write and what not * it's very difficult to just say ah today you have an assignment

you have to write a poem * I wouldn't know what to write so I don't like the fact that I would be constricted to write about nature or about this or about that * I don't say today I'm going to write a poem about this * it just comes to my head

INTERVIEWER: and do you think that you can be taught how to write poetry/

STUDENT: I think that if you have a gift to call it so you do understand more about ** what is going on

INTERVIEWER: can your teachers teach you how to write poetry/

STUDENT: well that would be interesting actually

INTERVIEWER: and would this have any benefits for you/ for what you're doing as part of the course/

STUDENT: I wouldn't know * there are people who choose English other than just to have an easy subject because that's what they might think * it's about someone who really loves the language * so you want to know about * I don't know * even if the teacher asks you to write poetry you can learn how you can structure it * even in the case when you have an unseen text * you can read it and you start noticing certain things * automatically because you have the know how

INTERVIEWER: what has your teacher told you to do when writing an essay about Wilfred Owen's poetry/

STUDENT: she hasn't told us anything other than that we have to write about three poems that relate to a specific theme * well that's all I know really

INTERVIEWER: and when it comes to writing an essay about an unseen poem/

STUDENT: it would be about the diction figures of speech * rhyming patterns * what you think that the writer wanted to say by writing that piece * that's it * that's all we've done up to now

INTERVIEWER: what else has your teacher told you to include in such essays/ for example in an essay on Wilfred Owen what should you write about/ what should you include/

STUDENT: quotations for example *** I don't know really

INTERVIEWER: let's move on to the next question * it's related to the previous one * I'm going to read out sort of a definition of personal response and then I'd like you to tell me what you think about it * so personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or about a number of poems by a particular poet * okay/ so personal response is when you

present what you think about a text about a poem * do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry

STUDENT: ** maybe in the conclusion a bit ** what you think * but not really no * as I told you before it's a structured essay * you have notes you have particular things to talk about and you have to stick to that

INTERVIEWER: and does your teacher encourage you to include a personal response in your essays or no/

STUDENT: as a conclusion just so they won't say no altogether * because unfortunately our exam is based on what is written by somebody else not about our own opinion

INTERVIEWER: you mentioned just so they won't say no altogether * what do you mean by that/

STUDENT: because you know when you ask a question about this they say yes but only in the conclusion so you realise that * they're telling you to include your opinion but only there * you can't write the whole essay about it * it would be considered out of point and you would be given a zero

INTERVIEWER: so out of point would mean what for your teacher/

STUDENT: saying for example * in Lear saying the story * you cannot write about the story * you have to write about how the story is linked to the themes * but you can't really give your opinion either * you know

INTERVIEWER: why not/ would that be considered out of point as well as you mentioned/

STUDENT: I think so yes * first of all you would never write I think that or I believe that because it would sound in a way elementary * you can never say I believe or I think

INTERVIEWER: and so who told you not to do this/ don't mention names

STUDENT: my tutorial teacher

INTERVIEWER: and why do you think they told you not to do this/

STUDENT: because it sounds elementary you know * even at university you can't ever say listen it is like that * you have to find a way to say it could be like that * probably they're teaching us from now to eliminate the I think

INTERVIEWER: now * what are you gaining out of your poetry lessons at this particular school/

STUDENT: ** I guess background about the First World War ** even reflection * you reflect about the war suffering and about the way people were unfortunately treated like animals ** background about * genius poems I mean poets * I guess

INTERVIEWER: and from your literary criticism lessons based on poetry what are you gaining from/

STUDENT: you learn how to analyse a poem in depth * you know about the diction * about how one thing is related to another * so yes it does help because you can analyse something and see beyond what is being said in black and white * so you read between the lines in a way * and you can also continue developing * your talent as it were

INTERVIEWER: have your poetry lessons at this school encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure/

STUDENT: ** well the teacher is very positive about poetry * but I doubt I'd be really interested * we have more than enough * I wish I could read more but you know

INTERVIEWER: why not/ why won't you/

STUDENT: there's too much to read * first of all I have another five subjects * each one is based on essays * you have to read you write you have to make notes * everything's structured * for English we have a number of novels and lots of poems to read * so if I had to read something else I'd rather read something for my exam so that I won't feel that I'm wasting my time

INTERVIEWER: and what about when you finish your studies/ do you think that your lessons about poetry have encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure in the future/

STUDENT: well if a good thing comes along yes I would be interested in reading it * I don't actually go for a poetry book * I don't really read poetry

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: because I do like listening to it in class and analysing it with somebody else rather than just reading it myself * however * prose yes I do read a lot * in summer especially I make up for it

INTERVIEWER: and poetry in summer/

STUDENT: not really no

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: as I told you I'd rather read a story or something light than something that I may not be able to understand completely myself

INTERVIEWER: okay * now the next thing that we're going to do is basically * I'm going to give you a poem by Billy Collins who is a contemporary American writer and I'm going to give you some time to read it okay/ on your own * it's basically a poem entitled introduction to poetry * a poem about poetry and then I'd like you to tell me what you think about this poem keeping in mind what we've been talking about okay/ and telling me about your experience during a poetry lesson * okay/ so do you think that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/ so take your time

STUDENT: [reads poem] well apparently it's a teacher talking about his students *** he tries in a way to make it positive for the students so that they show interest in poetry ** by drop a mouse into a poem and watch him make his way out he shows the many links that there are in just one poem * water-ski means that he wants them to enjoy it and understand it * would mean that it's easy to understand * but unfortunately in their case they just don't like it * they just want to torture it * torture a confession means that they find it so hard that they find it discouraging it ** and they * beat it with a hose pipe to find what it really means * they don't understand and they want the poem to be more self explanatory so that they can write an essay or whatever based on what they can read

INTERVIEWER: do you think this is describing your experience during a poetry lesson/

STUDENT: well first of all I like poetry so I wouldn't want to beat it * yes sometimes I do wish that it was more self explanatory but then in poetry you can almost understand what you want from it ** and different people have different backgrounds and different experiences and they would read it and understand it as something different * so when you read a poem everybody could have his own * you can read it with your own experience in a way

INTERVIEWER: is that what happens during your lessons/

STUDENT: * well without wanting to in a way * you do read and bring some background

INTERVIEWER: and are you encouraged by your teacher to do this kind of thing/

STUDENT: well not in the essay

INTERVIEWER: now if we look at the last line * to find out what it really means * do you feel that you can find one specific meaning in a poem

STUDENT: no * I think there are many different meanings

INTERVIEWER: and in your essays for the exam what are you expected to do/ are you expected to talk about the variety of meanings or/

STUDENT: well subject matter * what it is about that's based on our personal opinion

INTERVIEWER: but earlier you mentioned that you're not encouraged to include your personal response

STUDENT: I know ** for Wilfred Owen no * for *King Lear* you can't mention your opinion * in a criticism essay you can't just say I think so and so * it's not just about what you think it has to have more depth and you look for certain things * what they have taught you to think

INTERVIEWER: thank you very much for taking part in this interview

Appendix 57 – Pilot Study: Focus Group Interview Transcript: Students

INTERVIEWER: why is poetry on the syllabus/

STUDENT: [surprised] because it's part of literature!

INTERVIEWER: but should it be there/

STUDENT: yes for sure! [some of the students nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: and do you enjoy reading poetry at home/

STUDENT: no not really [all the students reply in the negative]

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: I don't have any like poetry books * well I do but don't actually look at them

STUDENT: lyrics perhaps

STUDENT: yeah sometimes

INTERVIEWER: you mentioned lyrics * for you that's poetry/ why is that poetry/ what makes it poetry/

STUDENT: it rhymes * there are figures of speech

INTERVIEWER: and your exposure to poetry would be restricted to that/

STUDENT: [student nods]

INTERVIEWER: and if someone had to tell you * listen I'm going to remove poetry from the syllabus * what would you tell that person/

STUDENT: no way [most of the students nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: because it's interesting and it says things about people

STUDENT: it's literature

INTERVIEWER: but at the same time you've said that you don't read poetry

STUDENT: well it's different

INTERVIEWER: in what way/

STUDENT: I don't feel comfortable reading an entire book of poetry * it's not like prose

STUDENT: poetry is important so it should definitely stay there

STUDENT: I wouldn't mind

INTERVIEWER: mind what/

STUDENT: removing poetry * I just don't get it sometimes

INTERVIEWER: what do you feel about your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: what do you mean/

INTERVIEWER: your lectures on Owen literary crit seminars and tutorials devoted to poetry * what do you feel about them/

STUDENT: I think there could be another book instead of Wilfred Owen * the main theme of war gets a bit

INTERVIEWER: gets a bit what/

STUDENT: a bit depressing

STUDENT: no I like it [most of the students agree with this]

INTERVIEWER: and do you find it easy/

STUDENT: well in comparison with crit poems Wilfred Owen is much more manageable

STUDENT: Owen's safe because we just have to write down what the teacher says

STUDENT: yeah * I'm afraid of crit because you're all on your own

INTERVIEWER: and which do you prefer as a component/

STUDENT: Wilfred Owen [all students agree with this]

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because I think he's amazing [laughs]

STUDENT: it's always the same so you just study and there are no surprises

INTERVIEWER: and what do you think of your literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: I don't know * I just think that we've spent most of these two years doing just like * we never actually learnt how to appreciate a poem * we look more at the different elements of a poem * the figures of speech and stuff like that [all the other students nod in agreement]

STUDENT: we don't really discuss why it's been written and what makes it special * we weren't trained for that

INTERVIEWER: so the main focus during your seminars was what/

STUDENT: learning about the different components of poetry [all the other students nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: what do you mean/

STUDENT: metaphors similes and so on

INTERVIEWER: and why was that the focus of these sessions in your opinion/

STUDENT: because that's what they expect in the exam

STUDENT: that's what they want

INTERVIEWER: so you were being trained for the exam/

STUDENT: yes of course ** if you're an English student like * I took English because I like it but some people take English because they think it's easy * we write essays and stuff but we don't really appreciate poetry * and that's what we should be doing

INTERVIEWER: you were going to say/

STUDENT: it doesn't make any sense * we do all these things which are so boring and we have to learn it

INTERVIEWER: and they try to make you learn it/

STUDENT: yes * I don't care about how the poet wrote this metaphor [laughs]

STUDENT: but it's important sometimes * it's just that they stuff it down our throats all the time

STUDENT: it's all about structure * it's so formal

STUDENT: we never really discuss anything else

STUDENT: or do any discussions

INTERVIEWER: what do you like about your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: Owen's okay [some students agree with this]

STUDENT: it's a bit boring though * she talks about the same things all the time

STUDENT: yeah it's always the same

STUDENT: but she gives us good notes

INTERVIEWER: is that important for you/

STUDENT: yeah * she explains the poem and then dictates a note

INTERVIEWER: every time/

STUDENT: whenever we finish a new poem

INTERVIEWER: how about your seminars and tutorials

STUDENT: in the seminars he reads the poem line by line and tells us what's important

STUDENT: we don't discuss or anything like that [most students nod in agreement]

STUDENT: Owen lectures are all about facts and the subject is easy because all the poems are about the same thing * in crit you have to find what the poem is saying and there are so many things that I feel lost

INTERVIEWER: and tutorials/ what do you like about them/

STUDENT: all about essays [all students in agreement]

STUDENT: guess we're learning something useful though * at least I hope so

INTERVIEWER: what don't you like about your poetry lessons/ for example what don't you like about your Wilfred Owen lectures/ what don't you like about them/ if there is anything that you don't like about them or anything that you would change that is

STUDENT: they're okay * nothing really [all students agree on this]

STUDENT: just a bit boring sometimes * talks a lot and I get sleepy [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: what about your literary criticism seminars/

STUDENT: they're really boring [most students nod in agreement]

STUDENT: yes very boring [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: they're all about essays

STUDENT: and we don't do any discussions

INTERVIEWER: but do you feel sufficiently trained for the exam/

STUDENT: not really * because for certain poems you'll find it easy to write an essay but for other poems you'll be lost * I don't know * I just feel that we do too much work on essays * it's as if that's all we do for poetry [all other students nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: and isn't that enough/

STUDENT: poetry is more than that * I don't know

INTERVIEWER: is there anything else that you would like to do during your poetry lessons/

STUDENT: more discussions perhaps [all students nod in agreement]

STUDENT: yes working together * letting us say what we think about a poem

STUDENT: especially during crit

STUDENT: yes of course

INTERVIEWER: would you like to be given the opportunity of writing poetry as part of the syllabus/

STUDENT: I agree * I do write poetry

INTERVIEWER: you write poetry/

STUDENT: yes [two students answer in the affirmative whereas two others shake their heads]

STUDENT: I did in secondary

INTERVIEWER: and did you enjoy that/

STUDENT: yes

INTERVIEWER: so if the syllabus had to change so that you're encouraged to write poetry as part of your course * what would you think of that/

STUDENT: I think it would be a good idea but I think then less people would choose it because people wouldn't feel comfortable with that

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because people wouldn't feel they're good enough

STUDENT: you can't force someone to write poetry

INTERVIEWER: but we do force you to write an essay don't we/

STUDENT: but that's different * we do that for the exam

INTERVIEWER: so if you had to be assessed in your A-level not only on your ability to write essays but also on your ability to write poems * what would you think of that/

STUDENT: I would like it

STUDENT: alla hares! [God forbid!]

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: because not everyone can do it

STUDENT: there would definitely be less students because how it is now you can get away with just studying and being able to write essays but if you actually had to write poems then I'm sure less people would choose it

STUDENT: I wouldn't want to be made to write poetry * it's something you're born with * you can't learn how to do it and even if you could it would be awful

INTERVIEWER: can you be trained to write poetry/

STUDENT: no [most students agree with this]

INTERVIEWER: no/ why not/

STUDENT: because ** you can train how to write in rhyme and rhythm but ** it comes from within * you can't do that

STUDENT: you're born a poet not made [laughs]

STUDENT: if everyone could do it it would have no value

INTERVIEWER: so if I had to bring a poet to class * and he or she is going to do a workshop with you * showing you how to write poetry * would that work or not/

STUDENT: ** don't know [the other students seemed doubtful and don't reply]

INTERVIEWER: let's imagine that during your literary criticism seminar this week we're going to be reading and writing poetry * what do you think about that/

STUDENT: I think everyone should try * but I don't think everyone would be able to write good poetry [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: why/

STUDENT: some people just have it * for example some people can draw and others can't * some people can write some people can't * like if everyone could write poems then everyone would write poems

STUDENT: but I think it's a good idea * you don't need to write brilliant poems in order to appreciate the poetry you know/

STUDENT: you could try

STUDENT: just don't ask me to do it

INTERVIEWER: so you would consider the possibility/

STUDENT: yes but not everyone might be able to do it [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: okay ** let's talk about your essays now * personal response in an essay is when you describe and analyse your own thoughts and feelings about an unseen poem or a number of poems by a particular poet * do you usually include your personal response in your essays about poetry/

STUDENT: no! [all students in agreement]

STUDENT: you have to write what is expected of you by the examiner * there is no room for your opinion

STUDENT: they never ever say what do you think and include that in an essay * ever

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: because it's like there's a right answer * but they never tell us that we should devote a paragraph to personal response

INTERVIEWER: and do you feel that that's important/

STUDENT: I think so

INTERVIEWER: why is that important/

STUDENT: it's like there isn't really a right or wrong answer or anything * obviously last time we wrote about Assisi and we got it completely wrong [laughs]

STUDENT: but maybe a paragraph saying what we think * that can't be wrong

INTERVIEWER: some students avoid using the first person in their essays * why do they do that/

STUDENT: we're told not to [all students in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: and why are you told not to/

STUDENT: I don't know [laughs] you tell us

INTERVIEWER: no you tell me * I'm interested in your opinion about this

STUDENT: * I don't know

STUDENT: it makes the essay too informal

STUDENT: it's not right for the exam

STUDENT: yes * if it were appropriate then our teachers would tell us no/

INTERVIEWER: do you think the examiner would penalise you if you had to use I in your essays/

STUDENT: I would avoid it just in case

INTERVIEWER: would you consider an essay in which the writer uses the first person as being less serious than one in which it isn't used/

STUDENT: it's a bit too personal

INTERVIEWER: but at the same time you'd like to include your personal response/

STUDENT: a bit * not too much

INTERVIEWER: is this how you genuinely feel about it/

STUDENT: * don't know

STUDENT: I don't agree * I mean we're writing the essay so our opinion is what counts * why shouldn't we include I/ I don't because that's what I'm supposed to do * but I think you know * I think it's important

INTERVIEWER: when you look back at these past two years * have your poetry lessons at Junior College encouraged you to read poetry for pleasure/

STUDENT: I think I will read poetry because I'm going to do English next year so I will have to

STUDENT: me too

STUDENT: I won't

INTERVIEWER: why not/

STUDENT: poetry is a waste of time * I won't ever read another poem in my life after this exam

INTERVIEWER: why is it a waste of time/

STUDENT: because you don't need it * I love literature but poetry just gets on my nerves

STUDENT: I prefer novels * there's a story * poems are short and sometimes hard to understand

INTERVIEWER: now I'd like you to read this poem by Billy Collins and to discuss it together as a group * then I'd like you to tell me what you think about it in the light

of what we've discussed [students read and discuss the poem together for a few minutes] do you feel that this poem is talking about your experience during a poetry lesson/ * especially over the past two years

STUDENT: personally I feel just like the students in the poem * meaning is what I'm after and that's what the examiners want me to do

STUDENT: yeah me too [all the others agree]

INTERVIEWER: what's happening in this poem/

STUDENT: it's from the point of view of a teacher who is explaining what he wants out of his students ** to appreciate it and find out beautiful things in it * however they just want to go through it and find one meaning

INTERVIEWER: and is that what you do as students/

STUDENT: yes [all the others agree]

INTERVIEWER: and why do you do that/

STUDENT: [laughs] you think there's a secret meaning ** you always think that they're trying to trick you

INTERVIEWER: that it's enigmatic/ that there's a hidden meaning/

STUDENT: yeah [the others nod in agreement]

INTERVIEWER: so at the end of the poem when he or she says beating it with a hose to find out what it really means * what does that say to you/

STUDENT: they want to torture the meaning out * a hidden meaning

INTERVIEWER: does the teacher want them to dissect the poem/

STUDENT: not dissect * he wants them to look at the poem and let the meaning and the beauty of it just come out * he doesn't want them to just break it down

INTERVIEWER: and they are doing what instead/

STUDENT: torturing it * torturing the poem

INTERVIEWER: and this teacher's approach * have you experienced this approach here at Junior College/

STUDENT: ** last year for our first crit lesson we had a different teacher and he didn't talk about criticism stuff * he talked about what literature really is

STUDENT: he seemed quite passionate

STUDENT: but then they changed him

INTERVIEWER: and the approach changed/

STUDENT: yes

INTERVIEWER: and which approach do you prefer/

STUDENT: the first one [all the students agree]

INTERVIEWER: the first one/ * and what happened during that lesson/

STUDENT: what do you mean/

INTERVIEWER: what did the teacher do that you can remember it so vividly/

STUDENT: as I've said he was passionate [laughs]

STUDENT: he talked about poetry in * well differently

STUDENT: not just about the exam

INTERVIEWER: thank you for participating in this discussion

List of References

Abety, P. A. (1991). The notional syllabus in literature. In C. Brumfit (Ed.), *Assessment in literature teaching* (pp. 93-105). London: Macmillan.

Adams, K., & Brace, I. (2006). *An introduction to market and social research: Planning and using research tools and techniques*. London: Kogan Page.

AERA. (2011). *Code of ethics*. Retrieved March 15, 2011, from http://www.aera.net/Portals/38/docs/About_AERA/CodeOfEthics%281%29.pdf

Albers, P. (2006). Imagining the possibilities in multimodal curriculum design. *English Education*, *38*(2), 75-101.

Alexander, J. (2013). Hearing the voice of poetry. In S. Dymoke, A. Lambirth & A. Wilson (Eds.), *Making poetry matter: International research on poetry pedagogy* (pp. 116-126). London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Allen, A. (2012). Cultivating the myopic learner: The shared project of high-stakes and low-stakes assessment. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *33*(5), 641-659.

Allwright, D. (1988). *Observation in the language classroom*. Harlow: Longman Group.

Altieri, C. (2001). Taking lyrics literally: Teaching poetry in a prose culture. *New Literary History*, *32*(2), 259-281.

Alvermann, D. E. (2009). Reaching/teaching adolescents: Literacies with a history. In J.V. Hoffman & Y.M. Goodman (Eds.), *Changing literacies for changing times: An historical perspective on the future of reading research, public policy, and classroom practices* (pp. 98-107). New York: Routledge.

American Psychological Association. (2009). *APA concise dictionary of psychology*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Amigoni, D., & Sanders, J. (2003). *Get set for English literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Anderson, P., & Morgan, G. (2008). *Developing tests and questionnaires for a national assessment of educational achievement* (Vol. 2). Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Andrews, R. (2001). *Teaching and learning English: A guide to recent research and its applications*. London: Continuum.

Andrews, R. (2003). *Research questions*. London: Continuum.

Andrews, R. (2004). Conclusion. In R. Andrews (Ed.), *The impact of ICT on literacy education* (pp. 202-214). London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Angrosino, M. (2007). *Doing ethnographic and observational research*. London: SAGE Publications.

Appleman, D. (2015). *Critical encounters in secondary English: Teaching literary theory to adolescents* (3rd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

AQR. (2013). Stimulus material. Retrieved September 12, 2013, from http://www.aqr.org.uk/glossary/stimulus-material

Archer, A. (2010). Multimodal texts in Higher Education and the implications for writing pedagogy. *English in Education, 44*(3), 201-213.

Arnold, M. (1908). *Reports on elementary schools: 1852-1882*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Armand, L. (2012). Poetry and the unpoetic. Retrieved November 29, 2014, from http://jacket2.org/article/poetry-and-unpoetic

Aronson, D. (2015, September). Kwame Alexander: Pied piper of poetry. *The Council Chronicle, 25*(1), 18-19.

Arthur, J. (2011). Is it appropriate to teach students about morality and values? In J. Lexmond & M. Grist (Eds.), *The character inquiry* (pp. 100-105). London: Demos.

Ary, D., Cheser Jacobs, L., Sorensen, C., & Razavieh, A. (2009). *Introduction to research in education* (8th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Asselin, M. (2000). Confronting assumptions: Preservice teachers' beliefs about reading and literature. *Reading Psychology, 21*(1), 31-55.

Atherton, C. (2004). Critical literature? Context and criticism in A level English Literature. *English Drama Media, 1*, 30-33.

Atherton, C., Green, A., & Snapper, G. (2015). *English literature B: A/AS level for AQA: Student book*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Atkin, J. M. (2007). Swimming upstream: Relying on teachers' summative assessments. *Measurement: Interdisciplinary Research and Perspectives, 5*(1), 54-57.

Au, W. W. (2008). Devising inequality: A Bernsteinian analysis of high-stakes testing and social reproduction in education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 29*(6), 639-651.

Austen, V. J. (2005). The value of creative writing assignments in English literature courses. *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*, *2*(2), 138-150.

Azzopardi, M. (2008). *Perceptions about the use of computers as literacy aids for young learners*. Unpublished BEd (Hons) dissertation, University of Malta.

Bakker, N. (2008). Passive gazing and the voiceless subject in the literature classroom. *English Academy Review*, *25*(2), 78-87.

Baldacchino, E. (1998). *English Language testing in the Secondary Education Certificate examination: An evaluation*. Unpublished MEd dissertation, University of Malta.

Balli, S. J. (2009). *Making a difference in the classroom: Strategies that connect with students*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

Ballinger, G. J. (2003). Bridging the Gap between A Level and Degree: Some observations on managing the transitional stage in the study of English Literature. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, *2*(1), 99-109.

Barbour, R. (2007). *Doing focus groups*. London: SAGE Publications.

Barrett, T. (2011). Breakthroughs in action research through poetry. *Educational Action Research*, *19*(1), 5-21.

Barrs, M., & Styles, M. (2013). Afterword. In S. Dymoke, A. Lambirth & A. Wilson (Eds.), *Making poetry matter: International research on poetry pedagogy* (pp. 184-195). London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Bartoli, M. (1994). *The use of stylistics in the teaching of English literature to Maltese sixth formers*. Unpublished BEd (Hons) dissertation, University of Malta.

Batho, R. (1998). Shakespeare in secondary schools. *Educational Review*, *50*(2), 163-172.

Beach, R. (1985). Adolescent attitudes and response to literature. *Child & Youth Services*, *7*(1-2), 9-18.

Beach, R., Appleman, D., Hynds, S., & Wilhelm, J. (2006). *Teaching literature to adolescents*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Beach, R., & Marshall, J. (1991). *Teaching literature in the secondary school*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Behar-Horenstein, L. S. (2010). Mixed methods research. In C. Kridel (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of curriculum studies* (Vol. 2) (pp. 575-579). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Bellis, N., Parr, G., & Doecke, B. (2009). The making of literature: A continuing conversation. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, *16*(2), 165–179.

Bennett, S., Matton, K., & Kervin, L. (2008). The 'digital natives' debate: A critical review of the evidence. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, *39*(5), 775-786.

Bensey, M. W. (1991). Growth through group work: Students' self-reports. *Assessment Update*, *3*(6), 7-10.

Benton, M., Teasey, J., Bell, R., & Hurst, K. (1988). *Young readers responding to poems*. London and New York: Routledge.

Benton, P. (1984). Teaching poetry: The rhetoric and the reality. *Oxford Review of Education*, *10*(3), 319-327.

Benton, P. (1986). *Pupil, teacher, poem*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Benton, P. (1999). Unweaving the rainbow: Poetry teaching in the secondary school I. *Oxford Review of Education*, *25*(4), 521-531.

Benton, P. (2000). The conveyor belt curriculum? Poetry teaching in the secondary school II. *Oxford Review of Education*, *26*(1), 81-93.

BERA. (2011). *Ethical guidelines for educational research*. Retrieved May 25, 2013, from

http://content.yudu.com/Library/A1t9gr/BERAEthicalGuideline/resources/index.htm

Bernard, H. R., & Ryan, G. W. (2010). *Analyzing qualitative data: Systematic approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Best, J., & Kahn, J. (1989). *Research in education*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Biesta, G., Priestley, M., & Robinson, S. (2015). The role of beliefs in teacher agency. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, *21*(6), 624-640.

Black, P., Harrison, C., Lee, C., Marshall, B., & Wiliam, D. (2003). *Assessment for learning: Putting it into practice*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Blake, J. (2008, February). The magpie teacher on poetry and storytelling. *NATE Classroom*, *4*, 27-29.

Blake, J. (2009). Using the Poetry Archive in the English classroom. *English Drama Media*, *13*, 24-28.

Blocksidge, M. (2000). Tennyson: Teaching a dead poet at A-Level. In M. Blocksidge (Ed.), *Teaching literature 11-18* (pp. 105-117). London and New York: Continuum.

Bloom, H. (2001). *How to read and why*. London: Fourth Estate.

Bluett, J. (2010). Oh, do not ask 'What is it?' An explication of the PhD through creative practice and its implications for the teaching of English. *English in Education*, *44*(1), 44-57.

Blythe, H., & Sweet, C. (2005). Creative writing and an overlooked population. *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*, *2*(2), 116-127.

Boden, M. A. (2004). *The creative mind: Myths and mechanisms* (2nd ed.). London and New York: Routledge.

Booktrust. (2010). *The Motion report: Poetry and young people*. London: Booktrust.

Booth, D., & Moore, B. (2003). *Poems please! Sharing poetry with children* (2nd ed.). Ontario: Pembroke Publishers.

Booth, D., & Swartz, L. (2004). *Literacy techniques for building successful readers and writers* (2nd ed.). Ontario: Pembroke Publishers.

BOP Consulting. (2009). *Thrive! poetry project: Strategic development report*. London: BOP Consulting.

Borg, M. (2001). Teachers' beliefs. *ELT Journal*, *55*(2), 186-188.

Borg, S., & Al-Busaidi, S. (2012). *Learner autonomy: English language teachers' beliefs and practices*. London: The British Council.

Borges, J. L. (2000). *This craft of verse* (C.A. Mihailescu, Ed.). Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Borman, K. M., Clarke, C., Cotner, B., & Lee, R. (2006). Cross-case analysis. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli & P. B. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 123-140). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Bowen, S. (1921, November 27). A poet on campus at the University of Michigan. Interview with R. Frost. *Detroit News*, p. 1.

Brantmeier, C. (2005). Nonlinguistic variables in advanced second language reading: Learners' self-assessment and enjoyment. *Foreign Language Annals*, *38*(4), 494-504.

Brigley, J. (2010). *Unlocking and using a secret language*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Swansea University.

Britzman, D. P. (2012). What is the use of theory? A psychoanalytic discussion. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, *19*(1), 43-56.

Brooks, G. W. (2007). Teachers as readers and writers and as teachers of reading and writing. *The Journal of Educational Research*, *100*(3), 177-191.

Brown, J. D., & Rodgers, T. S. (2002). *Doing second language research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brumfit, C. (1985). *Language and literature teaching: From practice to principle*. Oxford: Pergamon.

Bryant, L. (Ed.) (2015). *Critical and creative research methodologies in social work*. Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Burch, R. (2002). General introduction: Thinking between philosophy and poetry. In M. Verdicchio & R. Burch (Eds.), *Between philosophy and poetry: Writing, rhythm, history* (pp. 1-7). London and New York: Continuum.

Burdan, J. (2004). Walk with light: Guiding students through the conventions of literary analysis. *The English Journal*, *93*(4), 23-28.

Burkhardt, R. M. (2006). *Using poetry in the classroom: Engaging students in learning*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

Burns, A. (2010). *Doing action research in English language teaching: A guide for practitioners*. New York: Routledge.

Burton, M. (1989). English Studies revisited. In M. Burton (Ed.), *Enjoying texts: Using literary theory in the classroom* (pp. 1-7). Cheltenham: Stanley Thornes.

Butler, I. (2006). *Integrating language and literature in English Studies: A case of the English 100 course at the University of North West*. Unpublished DLitt et Phil thesis, University of South Africa.

Büyükkarci, K. (2014). Assessment beliefs and practices of language teachers in primary education. *International Journal of Instruction*, *7*(1), 107-120.

Cachia, R., Ferrari, A., Ala-Mutka, K., & Punie, Y. (2010). *Creative learning and innovative teaching: Final report on the study on creativity and innovation in education in the EU member states*. Luxembourg: European Union.

Cahnmann, M. (2003). The craft, practice, and possibility of poetry in educational research. *Educational Researcher*, *32*(3), 29-36.

Calfee, R. C., & Chambliss, M. (2003). The design of empirical research. In J. Flood, D. Lapp, J. R. Squire & J. M. Jensen (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching the English language arts* (2nd ed.) (pp. 152-170). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Callahan, M., & King, J. M. (2011). Classroom remix: Patterns of pedagogy in a techno-literacies poetry unit. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *55*(2), 134-144.

Callingham, M. (2004). *Market intelligence: How and why organisations use market research*. London: Kogan Page.

Calway, G. (2008, February). Don't be afraid: Poetry in the classroom. *NATE Classroom*, *4*, 60-62.

Calway, G. (2009). *Dracula* and theory: A bite-sized introduction to critical theory for A level. *English Drama Media*, *15*, 49-55.

Camilleri, A. (1996). Language values and identities: Code switching in secondary classrooms in Malta. *Linguistics and Education*, *8*(1), 85-103.

Camilleri, R. (2005). *Approaches to teaching English poetry in Maltese secondary schools*. Unpublished BEd (Hons) dissertation, University of Malta.

Carden, F. (2009). Using comparative data: A systems approach to a multiple case study. In D. Byrne & C.C. Ragin (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of case-based methods* (pp. 331-344). London: SAGE Publications.

Cardwell, M. (2013). *Dictionary of psychology*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Carter, R., & Long, M. N. (1987). *The web of words: Exploring literature through language: Teacher's book*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carter, R., & Long, M. N. (1991). *Teaching literature*. Harlow: Longman.

Casanave, C. P. (2010). Case studies. In B. Paltridge & A. Phakiti (Eds.), *Continuum companion to research methods in applied linguistics* (pp. 66-79). London & New York: Continuum.

Certo, J. L. (2013). Preadolescents writing and performing poetry. In S. Dymoke, A. Lambirth & A. Wilson (Eds.), *Making poetry matter: International research on poetry pedagogy* (pp. 105-115). London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Chambers, E., & Gregory, M. (2006). *Teaching and learning English literature*. London and Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory*. London: SAGE Publications.

Chatouphonexay, A., & Intaraprasert, C. (2014). Beliefs about English language learning held by EFL pre-service and in-service teachers in Lao people's democratic republic. *English Language Teaching*, *7*(3), 1-12.

Chelliah, S. L., & de Reuse, W. J. (2011). *Handbook of descriptive linguistic fieldwork*. London: Springer.

Chrzanowska, J. (2002). *Interviewing groups and individuals in qualitative market research*. London and Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Christenbury, L. (2000). 'The guy who wrote this poem seems to have the same feelings as you have': Reader-response methodology. In N.J. Karolides (Ed.), *Reader response in secondary and college classrooms* (2nd ed.) (pp. 47-60). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Chun, S. Y. (2014). EFL learners' beliefs about native and non-native English-speaking teachers: Perceived strengths, weaknesses, and preferences. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *35*(6), 563-579.

Clark, C., & Douglas, J. (2011). *Young people's reading and writing: An in-depth study focusing on enjoyment, behaviour, attitudes and attainment*. London: National Literacy Trust.

Cliff Hodges, G. (2005). Creativity in education. *English in Education*, *39*(3), 47-61.

Coe, R., Aloisi, C., Higgins, S., & Elliot Major, L. (2014, October). *What makes great teaching? Review of the underpinning research*. London: The Sutton Trust.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed.). London and New York: Routledge.

Colby, S., & Lyon, A. (2004). Heightening awareness about the importance of using multicultural literature. *Multicultural Education*, *11*(3), 24-28.

Coleridge, S. T. (1907). *Biographia literaria*. J. Shawcross (Ed.). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Collie, J., & Slater, S. (1987). *Literature in the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Collingborn, T. (1989). Enabling readers to open up texts. In M. Burton (Ed.), *Enjoying texts: Using literary theory in the classroom* (pp. 8-13). Cheltenham: Stanley Thornes.

Collins, B. (1988). Introduction to poetry. *The apple that astonished Paris*, 58. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press.

Collins, B. (Ed.). (2003). *Poetry 180: A turning back to poetry*. New York: Random House.

Collins, F. M., & Kelly, A. (2013). Primary student teachers' attitudes towards poetry and poetry teaching. In S. Dymoke, A. Lambirth & A. Wilson (Eds.), *Making poetry matter: International research on poetry pedagogy* (pp. 20-30). London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Collins, J. W., & O'Brien, N. P. (Eds.) (2011). *The Greenwood dictionary of education* (2nd ed.). Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood.

Colman, A. M. (2015). *Oxford dictionary of psychology* (4th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Commeyras, M., Bisplinghoff, B. S., & Olson, J. (2003). *Teachers as readers*. Newark, NJ: International Reading Association.

Connolly, B., & Smith, M. W. (2002). Teachers and students talk about talk: Class discussion and the way it should be. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *46*(1), 16-26.

Connolly, B., & Smith, M. W. (2003). Dropping in a mouse: Reading poetry with our students. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, *76*(5), 235-239.

Constantinides, M. (2015). Creating creative teachers. In A. Maley & N. Peachey (Eds.), *Creativity in the English language classroom* (pp. 115-122). London: British Council.

Corbett, P. (2010). Keynote speech. NATE Conference. 9-11 July 2010. Hinckley.

Costigan, A. T. (2008). *Teaching authentic language arts in a test-driven era*. New York: Routledge.

Costley, C., & Gibbs, P. (2006). Researching others: Care as an ethic for practitioner researchers. *Studies in Higher Education*, *31*(1), 89-98.

Coulter, C. A., & Smith, M. L. (2009). The construction zone: Literary elements in narrative research. *Educational Researcher*, *38*(8), 577-590.

Cowan, A. (2013, April 23). Creative writing: Out of the garret, into the classroom and workplace. *The Guardian*. Retrieved April 21, 2014 from http://www.guardian.co.uk/higher-education-network/blog/2013/apr/23/creative-writing-a-level-academia

Cox, B. (1991). *Cox on Cox: An English curriculum for the 1990's*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Coy, M. (2006). This morning I'm a researcher, this afternoon I'm an outreach worker: Ethical dilemmas in practitioner research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *9*(5), 419-431.

Craft, A. (2005). *Creativity in schools: Tensions and dilemmas*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Cranston, M. (2003). Rhyme or reason? The teaching of poetry in the foreign language classroom. *The French Review*, *76*(5), 954-966.

Cremin, T. (2006). Creativity, uncertainty and discomfort: Teachers as writers. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *36*(3), 415-433.

Cremin, T. (2010). Exploring poetry teachers: Teachers who read and readers who teach poetry. In M. Styles, L. Joy & D. Whitley (Eds.), *Poetry and childhood* (pp. 219-226). Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.

Cremin, T. (2013). Exploring teachers' positions and practices. In S. Dymoke, A. Lambirth & A. Wilson (Eds.), *Making poetry matter: International research on poetry pedagogy* (pp. 9-19). London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Cremin, T., Bearne, E., Mottram, M., & Goodwin, P. (2009). Teachers as readers in the 21st century. In M. Styles & E. Arizpe (Eds.), *Acts of Reading* (pp. 201-218). Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.

Cresswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Culler, J. (1988). *Framing the sign: Criticism and its institutions*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Cumming, R. (2007). Language play in the classroom: Encouraging children's intuitive creativity with words through poetry. *Literacy*, *41*(2), 93-101.

Cutajar, M., & Briffa, C. (2004). Assessing the learning of literature. South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment. Retrieved November 20, 2009, from http://www.spbea.org.fj/aceab/Cutajar.pdf

Dannhauser, W. J. (1995). Poetry vs. philosophy. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, *28*(2), 190-192.

D'Arcy, P. (1978). Sharing responses to literature. In E. Grugeon & P. Walden (Eds.), *Literature and learning* (pp. 137-149). London: Ward Lock Educational.

Davies, T. (2006). Creative teaching and learning in Europe: Promoting a new paradigm. *Curriculum Journal*, *17*(1), 37-57.

Dawson, J. (2010). Thick description. In A.J. Mills, G. Eurepos & E. Wiebe (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of case study research* (Vol. 2) (pp. 942-944). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Day, R. R., & Bamford, J. (1998). *Extensive reading in the second language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Day, R. R., & Bamford, J. (2002). Top ten principles for teaching extensive reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, *14*(2), 136-141.

Delanoy, W. (2005). A dialogic model for literature teaching. *ABAC Journal*, *25*, 53-66. Retrieved November 20, 2009, from http://www.journal.au.edu/abac_journal/2005/jan05/53dialogic.pdf

Dennen, V. P., & Burner, K. J. (2008). The cognitive apprenticeship model in educational practice. In J. M. Spector, M. D. Merrill, J. Van Merriënboer & M. P. Driscoll (Eds.), *Handbook of research on educational communications and technology* (3rd ed.) (pp. 425-439). New York and Abingdon: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Denscombe, M. (2010). *The good research guide: For small-scale social research projects* (4th ed.). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Department for Education. (2015, September 10). *Additional reformed GCSE and A level subject content consultation: Government consultation*. London: Department for Education. Retrieved October 1, 2015, from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/459669/Additional-reformed-GCSE-and-A-level-subject-content-consultation.pdf

Department of English. (n.d.). University of Malta Junior College Department of English. Retrieved February 17, 2010, from http://www.um.edu.mt/jc/english

Derrida, J. (1978). *Writing and difference* (A. Bass, Trans.). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. (Original work published 1967).

DES. (1975). *A language for life*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

DES. (1989). *Report of the English from 5 to 16 working party*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

DeWalt, K. M., & DeWalt, B. R. (2002). *Participant observation: A guide for fieldworkers*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

DfEE. (2000). *Grammar for writing*. London: Department for Education and Employment.

Dias, P. (2009). Life-long readers of poetry? Why not? *LEARNing Landscapes*, *3*(1), 123-138.

Dias, P. (2010). How and why does poetry matter? And what do we do about that? *LEARNing Landscapes*, *4*(1), 21-27.

Dias, P., & Hayhoe, M. (1988). *Developing response to poetry*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Dinkins, E. G. (2014). Three-point shot: Basketball, poetry and critical literacy. *English Journal*, *104*(1), 48-53.

Disney, D. (2012). 'Is this how it's supposed to work?' Poetry as a radical technology in L2 creative writing classrooms. *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*, *9*(1), 4-16.

Dixon, J. (1969). *Growth through English* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dixon, J. (1983). Writing in response to literature. In A. Freedman, I. Pringle & J. Yalden (Eds.), *Learning to write: First language/second language* (pp. 219-226). London: Longman.

Donato, R., Tucker, G. R., Wudthayagorn, J., & Igarashi, K. (2000). Converging evidence: Attitudes, achievements, and instruction in the later years of FLES. *Foreign Language Annals*, *33*(4), 377-393.

Dong, Y. R. (2005). Bridging the cultural gap by teaching multicultural literature. *The Educational Forum*, *69*(4), 367-382.

Donnelly, R. (2004). Fostering of creativity within an imaginative curriculum in higher education. *Curriculum Journal*, *15*(2), 155-166.

Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dörnyei, Z., & Taguchi, T. (2010). *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing* (2nd ed.). Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Doug, R. (2011). The British schools' National Curriculum: English and the politics of teaching poetry from 'different cultures and traditions'. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *43*(4), 439-456.

Dourneen, J. (2010). Setting free the spirit of English in the Brecon Beacons: The value of learning outside the classroom. *English in Education*, *44*(1), 59-75.

Dressman, M. (2010). *Let's poem: The essential guide to teaching poetry in a high-stakes, multimodal world*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Drever, E. (2003). *Using semi-structured interviews in small-scale research: A teacher's guide* (Rev. ed.). Glasgow: The SCRE Centre, University of Glasgow.

Duff, A., & Maley, A. (2007). *Literature* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Duff, P. A. (2007). Qualitative approaches to classroom research with English language learners. In J. Cummins & C. Davison (Eds.), *International handbook of English language teaching: Part II* (pp. 973-986). New York: Springer.

Dunning, S. (1966). *Teaching literature to adolescents: Poetry*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company.

Dymoke, S. (2000). *The teaching of poetry in secondary schools*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nottingham.

Dymoke, S. (2001). Taking poetry off its pedestal: The place of poetry writing in an assessment-driven curriculum. *English in Education*, *35*(3), 32-41.

Dymoke, S. (2002). The dead hand of the exam: The impact of the NEAB anthology on poetry teaching at GCSE. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, *9*(1), 85-93.

Dymoke, S. (2003). *Drafting and assessing poetry: A guide for teachers*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

Dymoke, S. (2009). *Teaching English texts 11-18*. London: Continuum.

Dymoke, S. (2011). Creativity in English teaching and learning. In J. Davison, C. Daly & J. Moss (Eds.), *Debates in English teaching* (pp. 142-156). Abingdon: Routledge.

Dymoke, S. (2012). Poetry is an unfamiliar text: Locating poetry in secondary English classrooms in New Zealand and England during a period of curriculum change. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education, 19*(4), 395-410.

Dymoke, S. (2013). Teaching poetry in New Zealand secondary schools at a time of curricular change. In S. Dymoke, A. Lambirth & A. Wilson (Eds.), *Making poetry matter: International research on poetry pedagogy* (pp. 154-166). London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Dymoke, S. (2014). Opportunities or constraints? Making space. In A. Goodwyn, L. Reid & C. Durrant (Eds.), *International perspectives on teaching English in a globalised world* (pp. 25-39). Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Dymoke, S., & Hughes, J. (2009). Using a poetry wiki: How can the medium support pre-service teachers of English in their professional learning about writing poetry and teaching poetry writing in a digital age? *English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 8*(3), 91-106.

Dymoke, S., Lambirth, A., & Wilson, A. (2013). Introduction. In S. Dymoke, A. Lambirth & A. Wilson (Eds.), *Making poetry matter: International research on poetry pedagogy* (pp. 1-6). London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Eaglestone, R. (1999, November 30). A critical time for English. *The Guardian*. Retrieved May 4, 2010, from http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/1999/nov/30/schools.theguardian1

Eaglestone, R. (2001). Active voice! Responding to Adrian Barlow on the new English Literature A-levels. English Association Newsletter, 166. Retrieved January 11, 2010, from http://www.le.ac.uk/engassoc/info/se3.html

Eaglestone, R. (2009). *Doing English: A guide for literature students* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.

Eagleton, T. (1996). *Literary theory: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Blackwell.

Earl, L. M. (2003). Assessment as learning: Using classroom assessment to maximize student learning. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Ebejer, G., & Vella, R. (1986). *O-Level English Literature: Relevance and enjoyment*. Unpublished BEd (Hons) dissertation, University of Malta.

Eco, U. (1992). Overinterpreting texts. In S. Collini (Ed.), *Interpretation and overinterpretation* (pp. 45-66). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Eco, U. (2004). *On literature* (M. McLaughlin, Trans.). New York: Harcourt. (Original work published 2002).

Edmundson, M. (2004). *Why read?* New York: Bloomsbury.

Eisenhart, M. (2006). Representing qualitative data. In J.L. Green, G. Camilli & P.B. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 567-581). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Elbaz-Luwisch, F. (2002). Writing as inquiry: Storying the teaching self in writing workshops. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *32*(4), 403-428.

Eliot, T. S. (1943). *Four quartets*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

Eliot, T. S. (1956). The frontiers of criticism. *The Sewanee Review*, *64*(4), 525-543.

Elkins, D. (1976). *Teaching literature: Designs for cognitive development*. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill.

Ely, M. (1991). *Doing qualitative research: Circle within circles*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Emert, T. (2015). Pairing poetry and technology: Teaching from the 'outside inward'. *English Journal*, *104*(4), 59-64.

Erixon, P. O. (2004). The garden of thought: About writing poems in upper secondary school. In G. Rijlaarsdam, H. Van den Bergh & M. Couzijn (Eds.), *Effective learning and teaching of writing* (2nd ed.) (pp. 131-140). Boston: Kluwer.

ESRC. (2015, January). *ESRC framework for research ethics*. Retrieved February 15, 2015, from http://www.esrc.ac.uk/files/funding/guidance-for-applicants/esrc-framework-for-research-ethics-2015/

Essex, C. (2006). Digital video in the K-12 classroom: A new tool for learning. In L. Tan Wee Hin & R. Subramaniam (Eds.), *Handbook of research on literacy in technology at the K-12 level* (pp. 247-270). Hershey: Idea Group Reference.

Evans, C., Midgley, A., Rigby, P., Warham, L., & Woolnough, P. (2009). *Teaching English: Developing as a reflective secondary teacher*. London and Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Ewing, R. (2010). *The arts and Australian education: Realising potential*. Victoria: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Exton, R. (1984). The language of literature. In J. Miller (Ed.), *Eccentric propositions: Essays on literature and the curriculum* (pp. 70-79). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Fabb, N. (2015). *What is poetry? Language and memory in the poems of the world*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fall, R., Webb, N. M., & Chudowsky, N. (2000). Group discussion and large-scale language arts assessment: Effects on students' comprehension. *American Educational Research Journal*, *37*(4), 911-941.

Fearn, L., & Farnan, N. (2007). The influence of professional development on young writers' writing performance. *Action in Teacher Education*, *29*(2), 17-28.

Feldman, D. (2011). Beyond the classroom: Writing as therapy. *Journal of Poetry Therapy: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Practice, Theory, Research and Education*, *24*(2), 93-104.

Fish, S. (2008). *Save the world on your own time*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fisher, M. T. (2005). From the coffee house to the school house: The promise and potential of spoken word poetry in school contexts. *English Education*, *37*(2), 115-131.

Fitzgerald, B., Smith, L., & Monk, J. (2012). Celebrating creativity collaboratively: Inspiring PGCE English trainees to teach creative writing. *English in Education*, *46*(1), 56-69.

Flanders, N. A. (1970). *Analyzing teaching behavior*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Fleming, M., & Stevens, D. (2015). *English teaching in the secondary school: Linking theory and practice* (4th ed.). Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Fletcher, M., & Plakoyiannaki, E. (2010). Sampling. In A. J. Mills, G. Eurepos & E. Wiebe (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of case study research* (Vol. 2) (pp. 837-840). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Flick, U. (2009). *An introduction to qualitative research* (4th ed). London and Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Flood, A. (2014, June 1). Jeremy Paxman says poets must start engaging with ordinary people. *The Guardian*. Retrieved January 5, 2015, from http://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/jun/01/jeremy-paxman-poets-engage-ordinary-people-forward-prize

Folkestad, H. (2000). 'Getting the picture: Photo-assisted conversations as interviews. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, *2*(2), 3-21.

Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge and the discourse on language* (A. M. Sheridan Smith, Trans.). London: Tavistock. (Original work published 1969).

Franken, R. E. (2006). *Human motivation* (3rd ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Fraser, D. M. (1997). Ethical dilemmas and practical problems for the practitioner researcher. *Educational Action Research*, *5*(1), 161-171.

Frye, N. (1963). *The well-tempered critic*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Fullan, M., & Langworthy, M. (2014). *A rich seam: How new pedagogies find deep learning*. London: Pearson.

Fuller, K. (2010). English lessons: Children's poetic perspectives. *English in Education*, *44*(2), 146-163.

Furniss, T., & Bath, M. (2007). *Reading poetry: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Harlow: Pearson Education.

Gabbert, B., Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1986). Cooperative learning, group-to-individual transfer, process gain, and the acquisition of cognitive reasoning strategies. *The Journal of Psychology*, *120*(3), 265-278.

Gallavan, N. P., Bowles, F. A., & Young, C. T. (2007). Learning to write and writing to learn: Insights from teacher candidates. *Action in Teacher Education*, *29*(2), 61-69.

Gareis, C. R., & Grant, L. W. (2008). *Teacher-made assessments: How to connect curriculum, instruction, and student learning*. Abingdon and New York: Eye on Education.

Garner, R. (2013, February 26). Pupils face literary diet of 'dead white men'. *The Independent*. Retrieved August 25, 2015, from http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/pupils-face-literary-diet-of-dead-white-men-8512128.html

Gibbons, F. (2000, March 9). Laureate pleads for poetry in schools. *The Guardian*. Retrieved January 10, 2010, from http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2000/mar/09/schools.news

Gibbs, P., & Costley, C. (2006). An ethics of community and care for practitioner researchers. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, *29*(2), 239-249.

Gibson, J. (2010, November). *Small group teaching in English Literature: A good practice guide*. Egham: The English Subject Centre.

Gilbert, A. (2006). *Another future: Poetry and art in a postmodern twilight*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Gillespie, T. (2010). *Doing literary criticism: Helping students engage with challenging texts*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Gillham, B. (2008). *Observation techniques: Structured to unstructured*. London: Continuum.

Gillis, A. (2014). Poetry: An Introduction. In D. Cavanagh, A. Gillis, M. Keown, J. Loxley & R. Stevenson (Eds.), *The Edinburgh introduction to studying English literature* (2nd ed.) (pp. 37-46). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Giroux, H. (1997). *Pedagogy and the politics of hope: Theory, culture and schooling*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Glaser, B. (1999). The future of grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research*, *9*(6), 836-845.

Glover, S. (2010). Cohort-based supervision of postgraduate creative writers: The effectiveness of the university-based writers' workshop. *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*, *7*(2), 123-136.

Goodwyn, A. (2012). The status of literature: English teaching and the condition of literature teaching in schools. *English in Education*, *46*(3), 212-227.

Gorard, S., & Taylor, C. (2004). *Combining methods in educational and social research*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Gordon, J. (2004). Verbal energy: Attending to poetry. *English in Education*, *38*(1), 90-101.

Gordon, J. (2008). True soundings: The findings of the 2007 OFSTED report 'Poetry in schools' and pupils' responses to poetry they hear. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, *15*(2), 223-233.

Gordon, J. (2009). Sound[']s right: Pupils' responses to heard poetry and the revised National Curriculum for English. *Curriculum Journal*, *20*(2), 161-175.

Gordon, J. (2010). What is not said on hearing poetry in the classroom. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, *9*(3), 40-52.

Gordon, J. (2012). Echo, not quotation: What Conversation Analysis reveals about classroom responses to heard poetry. *Classroom Discourse*, *3*(1), 83-103.

Gordon, J. (2013). Heard poetry and oral response. In S. Dymoke, A. Lambirth & A. Wilson (Eds.), *Making poetry matter: International research on poetry pedagogy* (pp. 127-137). London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Gordon, J. (2014). *A pedagogy of poetry through the poems of W. B. Yeats*. London: Trentham Books/Institute of Education.

Gorlewski, J., & Gorlewski, D. (2015). From the editors. *English Journal*, *104*(4), 11.

Gorman, S. (2007). Managing research ethics: A head-on collision? In A. Campbell & S. Groundwater-Smith (Eds.), *An ethical approach to practitioner research: Dealing with issues and dilemmas in action research* (pp. 8-23). Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Gosling, D. (2006, November 15). Guidelines for peer observation of learning and teaching. ESCalate. Retrieved August 1, 2010, from http://escalate.ac.uk/resources/peerobservation/glossary_criteria.html

Graham, S. J. (2004). Giving up on modern foreign languages? Students' perceptions of learning French. *Modern Language Journal*, *88*(2), 171-191.

Graham, S., Santos, D., & Francis-Brophy, E. (2014). Teacher beliefs about listening in a foreign language. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *40*, 44-60.

Grainger, T., Barnes, J., & Scoffham, S. (2004). A creative cocktail: Creative teaching in initial teacher education. *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy*, *30*(3), 243-253.

Granić, A., Mifsud, C., & Ćukušić, M. (2009). Design, implementation and validation of a Europe-wide pedagogical framework for e-Learning. *Computers & Education*, *53*, 1052–1081.

Grant, C. A. (2004). Oppression, privilege, and high-stakes testing. *Multicultural Perspectives*, *6*(1), 3-11.

Green, A. (2009). Creative writing in A level English literature. *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*, *6*(3), 187-195.

Gregory, H. (2008). The quiet revolution of poetry slam: The sustainability of cultural capital in the light of changing artistic conventions. *Ethnography and Education*, *3*(1), 63-80.

Gregory, H. (2013). Youth take the lead: Digital poetry and the next generation. *English in Education*, *47*(2), 118-133.

Gribble, J. (1983). *Literary education: A revaluation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Grima, G., Camilleri, R., Chircop, S., & Ventura, F. (2005). *MATSEC: Strengthening a national examination system*. Floriana, Malta: Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment.

Groundwater-Smith, S., & Mockler, N. (2007). Ethics in practitioner research: An issue of quality. *Research Papers in Education*, *22*(2), 199-211.

Guilloteaux, M. J., & Dörnyei, Z. (2008). Motivating language learners: A classroom-oriented investigation of the effects of motivational strategies on student motivation. *TESOL Quarterly*, *42*(1), 55-77.

Hakes, B. (2008). *When critical thinking met English literature: A resource book for teachers and their students*. Oxford: How to Books.

Hall, C., & Thomson, P. (2005). Creative tensions? Creativity and basic skills in recent educational policy. *English in Education*, *39*(3), 5-18.

Hall, G. (2003). Poetry, pleasure, and second language learning classrooms. *Applied Linguistics*, *24*(3), 395-399.

Hall, R. (2008). *Applied social research: Planning, designing and conducting real-world research*. South Yarra: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hallett, R. E. (2013). Dangers of member checking. In W. Midgley, P. A. Danaher & M. Baguley (Eds.), *The role of participants in education research: Ethics, epistemologies, and methods* (pp. 29-39). New York: Routledge.

Hamann, J. G. (1950). *Sämtliche werken* (Vol. 2). J. Nadler. (Ed.). Vienna: Verlag Herder.

Hammersley, M. (2004). Reflexivity. In M. S. Lewis-Beck, A. Bryman & T. F. Liao (Eds.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of social science research methods* (Vol. 3) (pp. 933-935). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Hanauer, D. I. (2001). The task of poetry reading and second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, *22*(3), 295-323.

Hanauer, D. I. (2010). *Poetry as research: Exploring second language poetry writing*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.

Hanratty, B. (2008). Opening the windows of wonder: A critical investigation into the teaching and learning of poetry at Key Stage Four in Northern Ireland. *Irish Educational Studies*, *27*(2), 147-158.

Hanratty, B. (2011). Poetry and gender: a comparative evaluation of boys' and girls' responses to poetry at Key Stage 4 in Northern Ireland. *Research Papers in Education*, *26*(4), 413-426.

Harbon, L., & Shen, H. (2010). Researching language classrooms. In B. Paltridge & A. Phakiti (Eds.), *Continuum companion to research in applied linguistics* (pp. 274-285). London & New York: Continuum.

Hardman, F. (2001). What do we mean by secondary English teaching? In J. Williamson, M. Fleming, F. Hardman & D. Stevens (Eds.), *Meeting the standards in secondary English* (pp. 12-34). London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Hardman, F. (2008). *The quality of teaching and learning in Tanzanian primary schools: A baseline study*. Tanzania: UNICEF.

Hardman, F., & Beverton, S. (1993). Co-operative group work and the development of metadiscoursal skills. *Support for Learning*, *8*(4), 146-150.

Hardman, F., & Beverton, S. (1995). Developing collaborative group work in the primary school: The importance of metacognition. *Reading*, *29*(2), 11-15.

Hardman, F., & Leat, D. (1998). Images of post-16 English teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *14*(4), 359-369.

Hardman, F., & Mroz, M. (1999). Post-16 English teaching: From recitation to discussion. *Educational Review*, *51*(3), 283-293.

Hardman, F., & Williamson, J. (1993). Student teachers and models of English. *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy*, *19*(3), 279-292.

Hardman, F., & Williamson, J. (1998). The discourse of post-16 English teaching. *Educational Review*, *50*(1), 5-14.

Harfitt, G., & Chu, B. (2011). Actualizing reader-response theory on L2 teacher training programs. *TESL Canada Journal*, *29*(1), 93-103.

Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional capital: Transforming teaching in every school*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Harkin, J., Turner, G., & Dawn, T. (2001). *Teaching young adults: A handbook for teachers in post-compulsory education*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Harper, D. (2002). Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation. *Visual Studies*, *17*(1), 13–26.

Harrison, B., & Gordon, H. (1983). Metaphor is thought: Does Northtown need poetry? *Educational Review*, *35*(3), 265-278.

Harward, S., Peterson, N., Korth, B., Wimmer, J., Wilcox, B., Morrison, T. G., Black, S., Simmerman, S., & Pierce, L. (2014). Writing instruction in elementary classrooms: Why teachers engage or do not engage students in writing. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, *53*(3), 205-224.

Hatch, M. J. (1996). The role of the researcher: An analysis of narrative position in organization theory. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *5*(4), 359-374.

Hattie, J. (2012). *Visible learning for teachers: Maximizing impact on learning*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Hayes, N., & Stratton, P. (2003). *A student's dictionary of psychology* (4th ed.). London: Hodder Education.

Hayes, S. M. (2001). Use of popular and literary criticism in providing subject access to imaginative literature. *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, *32*(4), 71-97.

Heaney, S. (1980). *Preoccupations: Selected prose 1968-1978*. London: Faber and Faber.

Hedgcock, J. S., & Ferris, D. R. (2009). *Teaching readers of English: Students, texts, and contexts*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Heidegger, M. (1971). *Poetry, language, thought*. (A. Hofstadter, Trans.). New York: Harper & Row.

Hennessy, J., Hinchion, C., & Mannix McNamara, P. (2010). Poetry and pedagogy: Exploring the opportunity for epistemological and affective development within the classroom. *Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal (LICEJ)*, *1*(3), 178-185.

Hennessy, J., & Mannix McNamara, P. (2011). Packaging poetry? Pupils' perspectives of their learning experience within the post-primary poetry classroom. *English in Education*, *45*(3), 206-223.

Hennessy, J., & Mannix McNamara, P. (2012). 'What rough beast?' Conceptualising the poetry teacher in Ireland through the eyes of the pupil. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, *40*(4), 379-394.

Hennessy, J., & Mannix McNamara, P. (2013). At the altar of educational efficiency: Performativity and the role of the teacher. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, *12*(1), 6-22).

Hennink, M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2011). *Qualitative research methods*. London and Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Henshon, S. E. (2012). Teaching with a vision: Bringing your inner poet into the classroom. In C. Smallwood, C. S. Harris & C. Brackett-Vincent (Eds.), *Women on poetry: Writing, revising, publishing and teaching* (pp. 114-116). Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company.

Higgins, C. (2010). Gender identities in language education. In H. N. Hornberger & S. L. McKay (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language education* (pp. 370-397). Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters.

Hirvela, A., & Boyle, J. (1988). Literature courses and student attitudes. *ELT Journal*, *42*(3), 179-184.

Hitchcock, J. L. (2005). Reflections on 'Dusting': Poetry's educational and therapeutic capacity to convey and evoke multiple meanings. *Journal of Poetry Therapy: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Practice, Theory, Research and Education*, *18*(4), 195-205.

Hoffman, J., Assaf, L. C., & Paris, S. (2001). High stakes testing in reading: Today in Texas, tomorrow? *The Reading Teacher*, *54*, 482-499.

Holbrook, D. (1961). *English for maturity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Holbrook, D. (1964). *English for the rejected*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Holbrook, D. (1967). *The exploring word*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Holliday, A. (2010). Analysing qualitative data. In B. Paltridge & A. Phakiti (Eds.), *Continuum companion to research in applied linguistics* (pp. 98-110). London & New York: Continuum.

Holmes, V. L., & Moulton, M. R. (2001). *Writing simple poems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hope, S. (2010). Creativity, content, and policy. *Arts Education Policy Review*, *111*(2), 39-47.

Hourd, M. J. (1949). *The education of the poetic spirit: A study in children's expression in the English lesson*. London: Heinemann.

Hughes, J. (2009). *Poets, poetry and new media: Attending to the teaching and learning of poetry*. Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag.

Hughes, J. (2013). Digital poetry, power and social justice. In S. Dymoke, A. Lambirth & A. Wilson (Eds.), *Making poetry matter: International research on poetry pedagogy* (pp. 167-179). London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Hughes, T. (1967). *Poetry in the making*. London: Faber and Faber.

Hughes, T. (1994). *Winter pollen: Occasional prose* W. Scammell, (Ed.). London: Faber and Faber.

Hutchison, P. A. (1907). Poetry, philosophy, and religion. *PMLA*, *22*(4), 697-706.

Hyland, K. (2009). *Teaching and researching writing* (2nd ed.). Harlow: Pearson Education.

Ings, R. (2009). *Writing is primary: Action research on the teaching of writing in primary schools*. London: Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

Institute for Learning. (2010). *Brilliant teaching and training in FE and skills: A guide to effective CPD for teachers, trainers and leaders*. Retrieved April 10, 2011, from, http://www.ifl.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/16400/IfL2010-BrilliantTeachingAndTrainingGuide.pdf

Iser, W. (1978). *The act of reading: A theory of aesthetic response*. London: Routledge.

Iser, W. (1988). The reading process: A phenomenological approach. In D. Lodge (Ed.), *Modern criticism and theory: A reader* (pp. 212-228). Harlow: Longman.

Issitt, J., & Issitt, M. (2010). Learning about the world of the student: Writing poetry for teacher–student understanding. *Education 3-13: International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education*, *38*(1), 101-109.

Jackson, D. (1984). Dealing with a set book in literature at 16+. In J. Miller (Ed.), *Eccentric propositions: Essays on literature and the curriculum* (pp. 204-218). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

James, G. (2005). Creative writing in other languages. *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*, *2*(1), 44-57.

Jarvis, C. (2000). Reading and knowing: How the study of literature affects adults' beliefs about knowledge. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *19*(6), 535-547.

Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2012). *Educational research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Jollimore, T. (2009). 'Like a picture or a bump on the head': Vision, cognition, and the language of poetry. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, *33*(1), 131-158.

Jewitt, C. (2005). *Technology, literacy and learning: A multimodal approach*. London: Routledge.

Junior College. (2008). *Look before you leap: A profile of subjects offered for the Matriculation Certificate examination at Advanced and Intermediate levels* (11th ed.). Msida: University of Malta Junior College.

Junior College. (2015). *Junior College prospectus* (2nd ed.). Msida: Office of the Principal, University of Malta Junior College.

Junqueira, L., & Kim, Y. (2013). Exploring the relationship between training, beliefs, and teachers' corrective feedback practices: A case study of a novice and an experienced ESL teacher. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, *69*(2), 181-206.

Karolides, N. J. (Ed.) (2000). *Reader response in secondary and college classrooms* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Keengwe, J., Onchwari, G., & Oigara, J. N. (Eds.) (2014). *Promoting active learning through the flipped classroom model*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Kelly, A., & Collins, F. (2009, October). A poem a day: Student teachers and poetry. *NATE Classroom*, *9*, 28-29.

Kermode, F. (1989). *An appetite for poetry: Essays in literary interpretation*. London: Collins.

Kernan, A. (1990). *The death of literature*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Keyworth, S., & Robison, C. (2015). *Writing and understanding poetry for teachers and students: A heart's craft*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Kivy, P. (2011). Paraphrasing poetry (for profit and pleasure). *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *69*(4), 367-377.

Knights, B., & Thurgar-Dawson, C. (2006). *Active reading: Transformative writing in literary studies*. London: Continuum.

Koch, L., & Kendall, M. (2003). Older teenagers' attitudes to a further education college library's fiction collection. *New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship*, *9*(1), 21-40.

Kress, G. (1994). *Learning to write*. London and New York: Routledge.

Kress, G. (2003). *Literacy in the new media age*. London: Routledge.

Kress, G., Jewitt, C., Bourne, J., Franks, A., Hardcastle, J., Jones, K., & Reid, E. (2005). *English in urban classrooms: A multimodal perspective on teaching and learning*. Abingdon: RoutledgeFalmer.

Kress, G., & Van Leeuwen, T. (1996), *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*. London and New York: Routledge.

Kress, G., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal discourse: The modes and media of contemporary communication*. London: Arnold Publishers.

Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2000), *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing interviews*. London: SAGE Publications.

Lamarque, P. (2009a). Poetry and abstract thought. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, *33*(1), 37-52.

Lamarque, P. (2009b). The elusiveness of poetic meaning. *Ratio*, *22*(4), 398-420.

Lambirth, A. (2007). *Poetry matters* (Rev. ed.). Leicester: UKLA.

Lambirth, A., Smith, S., & Steele, S. (2012). 'Poetry is happening but I don't exactly know how': Literacy subject leaders' perceptions of poetry in their primary schools. *Literacy*, *46*(2), 73-80.

Langdridge, D., & Hagger-Johnson, G. (2009). *Introduction to research methods and data analysis in psychology* (2nd ed.). Harlow: Pearson Education.

Lazar, G. (1993). *Literature and language teaching: A guide for teachers and trainers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Leavis, F. R. (1943). *Education and university*. London: Chatto and Windus.

Leithauser, B. (2013, January 25). Why we should memorize. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved July 22, 2015, from http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/why-we-should-memorize

Lennard, J. (2005). *The poetry handbook* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

León, R. J. (2010). *Engagement through poetry: A qualitative study of the high school literacy project*. Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest.

Lepore, E., & Stone, M. (2012, December 2). Philosophy and the poetic imagination. *The New York Times*. Retrieved July 29, 2015, from http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/12/02/philosophy-and-the-poetic-imagination/

Levitt, R., Kramer-Vida, L., Palumbo, A., & Kelly, S. P. (2014). Professional development: A skills approach to a writing workshop. *The New Educator*, *10*(3), 248-264.

Lewis, P. (1982). The post-structuralist condition. *Diacritics*, *12*(1), 2-24.

Lichtman, M. (2010). *Qualitative research in education: A user's guide* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Denzin, N. K. (2003). The seventh moment: Out of the past. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues* (2nd ed.) (pp. 611-640). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications.

Litosseliti, L. (2003). *Using focus groups in research*. London: Continuum.

Locke, T. (2013). Assessing student poetry: Balancing the demands of two masters. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, *12*(1), 23-45.

Locke, T., Alcorn, N., & O'Neill, J. (2013). Ethical issues in collaborative action research. *Educational Action Research*, *21*(1), 107-123.

Locke, T., & Andrews, R. (2004). A systematic review of the impact of ICT on literature-related literacies in English 5-16. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

Locke, T., Whitehead, D., Dix, S., & Cawkwell, G. (2011). New Zealand teachers respond to the 'National Writing Project' experience. *Teacher Development: An International Journal of Teachers' Professional Development*, *15*(3), 273-291.

Lockney, K., & Proudfoot, K. (2013). Writing the unseen poem: Can the writing of poetry help to support pupils' engagement in the reading of poetry? *English in Education*, *47*(2), 147-162.

Lodico, M. G., Spaulding, D. T., & Voegtle, K. H. (2010). *Methods in educational research: From theory to practice* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

López Ropero, L., & Moreno Álvarez, A. (2011). Multiculturalism in a selection of English and Spanish fiction and artworks. *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*, *17*(1), 93-104.

Low, G., & Beverton, S. (2004). A systematic review of the impact of ICT on literacy learning in English of learners between 5 and 16, for whom English is a second or additional language. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

Lycos, K. (2009). Philosophy and poetry: Plato's legacy. In *Living Philosophy: Collected papers and essays of Kimon Lycos*. Retrieved November 15, 2012, from http://www.kimonlycos.org/unpublished/philosophy-and-poetry-plato's-legacy

Mackey, A., & Gass, S. M. (2005). *Second language research: Methodology and design*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Magnifico, A. M. (2010). Writing for whom? Cognition, motivation, and a writer's audience. *Educational Psychologist*, *45*(3), 167-184.

Maley, A., & Moulding, S. (1985). *Poem into poem: Reading and writing poems with students of English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Maley, A., & Duff, A. (1989). *The inward ear: Poetry in the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mallarmé, S. (1957). *Poems* (C. F. MacIntyre, Trans.). Berkeley: University of California Press. (Original work published 1897)

Manguel, A. (2008). *The city of words*. London: Continuum.

Mansoor, A. (2010). Teaching creative writing to university level second language learners in Pakistan. *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*, *7*(3), 201-218.

Manuel, J., & Brindley, S. (2012). *Teenagers and reading: Literary heritages, cultural contexts and contemporary reading practices*. Kent Town, SA: Wakefield Press/AATE.

Manuel, J., Petrosky, T., & Dymoke, S. (2013). Editorial: Arts poetica and the 21st century English/literacy classroom. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, *12*(1), 1-5.

Manuel, J., & Robinson, D. (2002). What are teenagers reading? The findings of a survey of teenagers' reading choices and the implications of these for English teachers' classroom practice. *English in Australia*, *135*, 69-78.

Marshall, B. (2000). *English teachers: The unofficial guide: Researching the philosophies of English teachers*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Marshall, B. (2011). *Testing English: Formative and summative approaches to English assessment*. London and New York: Continuum.

Mathieson, M. (1980). The problem of poetry. *Use of English*, *31*(2), 36-43.

MATSEC. (2009). *Matriculation Certificate examination Advanced level English May 2009 examiners' report*. Malta: University of Malta.

MATSEC. (2010). *Advanced Matriculation syllabus English 2013*. Msida: MATSEC Support Unit, University of Malta. Retrieved November 15, 2010, from http://www.um.edu.mt/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/108024/AM10.pdf

MATSEC. (2014). *Matriculation Certificate examinations 2013*. Msida: MATSEC Support Unit, University of Malta.

Mattix, M. (2002). The pleasure of poetry reading and second language learning: A response to David Hanauer. *Applied Linguistics*, *23*(4), 515-518.

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Maykut, P., & Morehouse, R. (1994). *Beginning qualitative research: A philosophical and practical guide*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Maynard, S., MacKay, S., & Smyth, F. (2008). A survey of young people's reading: Thinking about fiction. *New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship*, *14*(1), 45-65.

McBride, K. D. (2004). Introduction. In K. D. McBride (Ed.), *Visual media and the humanities: A pedagogy of representation* (pp. xi-xix). Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.

McCarthey, S. J., & Ro, Y. S. (2011). Approaches to writing instruction. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, *6*(4), 273-295.

McDonough, J., & McDonough, S. (1997). *Research methods for English language teachers*. London: Edward Arnold.

McEvoy, S. (1999, November 30). The language of power. *The Guardian*. Retrieved May 4, 2010, from http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/1999/nov/30/schools.theguardian1

McGarrell, S. (2010). *The debate about the teaching of literature: A Caribbean viewpoint*. Saarbrucken: VDM Verlag.

McGough, R. (2013). Keynote speech. 47th Annual IATEFL Conference and Exhibition. 8-12 April 2013. Liverpool.

McGuinn, N. (2005) A place for the personal voice? Gunther Kress and the English curriculum. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, *12*(2), 205-217.

McGuinn, N. (2014a). The challenges and opportunities for engaging with poetry. In S. Dymoke, M. Barrs, A. Lambirth & A. Wilson (Eds.), *Making poetry happen: Transforming the poetry classroom* (pp. 7-15). London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

McGuinn, N. (2014b). *The English teacher's drama handbook: From theory to practice*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

McIrvin, M. (2000). Why contemporary poetry is not taught in the academy. *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, *54*(1), 89-99.

McNamara, T. (2000). *Language testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McNeill, B., & Kirk, C. (2014). Theoretical beliefs and instructional practices used for teaching spelling in elementary classrooms. *Reading and Writing*, *27*(3), 535-554.

McRae, J. (1991). *Literature with a small 'l'*. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan.

McVee, M. B., Bailey, N. M., & Shanahan, L. E. (2008). Using digital media to interpret poetry: Spiderman meets Walt Whitman. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *43*(2), 112-143.

McVey, D. (2008). Why all writing is creative writing. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, *45*(3), 289-294.

Medina, C. L. (2004). The construction of drama worlds as literary interpretation of Latina feminist literature. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, *9*(2), 145-160.

MEE. (2012). *National curriculum framework*. Malta: Ministry of Education and Employment. Retrieved February 16, 2013, from https://www.education.gov.mt/mediacenter.ashx?file=MediaCenter/Docs/1_NCF%20Booklet.pdf

Mellati, M., Fatemi, M. A., & Motallebzadeh, K. (2013). The relationship between Iranian ELT instructors' beliefs about language teaching and their practices in real classrooms. *English Language Teaching*, *6*(4),126-133.

Mendoza Lopez, E. (2005). Current state of the teaching of process writing in EFL classes: An observational study in the last two years of secondary school. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, *6*, 23-36. Retrieved August 1, 2010, from http://www.scielo.unal.edu.co/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1657-07902005000100003&lng=en&nrm=iso

Mercer, S., & Ryan, S. (2010). A mindset for EFL: Learners' beliefs about the role of natural talent. *ELT Journal*, *64*(4), 436-444.

Mertens, D. M. (2010). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Micallef, L., & Galea, J. (1991). *An evaluation of English Literature examinations at Ordinary level*. Unpublished BEd (Hons) dissertation, University of Malta.

Milian, M. (2005). Reformulation: A means of constructing knowledge in shared writing. *L1 – Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, *5*(3), 335-351.

Miller, S. M. (2010). Reframing multimodal composing for student learning: Lessons on purpose from the Buffalo DV project. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, *10*(2), 197- 219. Retrieved March 11, 2011, from http://www.citejournal.org/articles/v10i2languagearts3.pdf

Mills, N., Pajares, F., & Herron, C. (2006). A reevaluation of the role of anxiety: Self-efficacy, anxiety, and their relation to reading and listening proficiency. *Foreign Language Annals*, *39*(2), 276-295.

Millum, T. (2008, February). Taking time with your poems. *NATE Classroom*, *4*, 21-23.

Misson, R., & Morgan, W. (2006). *Critical literacy and the aesthetic: Transforming the English classroom*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Mitchell, A. H. (2002). When I hear a poem, I want to write. In J. B. Elliott & M. M. Dupuis (Eds.), *Young adult literature in the classroom* (pp. 152-169). Newark, NJ: International Reading Association.

Mitchell, S. (1993). The aesthetic and the academic – are they at odds in English literature at A Level? *English in Education*, *27*(1), 19-28.

Mole, J. (1973). The teacher and the postmistress. In N. Bagnall (Ed.), *New movements in the study and teaching of English* (pp. 189-205). London: Temple Smith.

Monsen, E. R., & Van Horn, L. (2008). *Research: Successful approaches* (3rd ed.). Chicago, IL: ADA.

Montessori, M. (1971). *The Montessori elementary material* (A. Livingston, Trans.). Cambridge MA: Robert Bentley. (Original work published 1917)

Moorhead, J. (2011, September 5). Carol Ann Duffy: 'Poems are a form of texting.' *The Guardian*. Retrieved March 16, 2014 from http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/sep/05/carol-ann-duffy-poetry-texting-competition

Morgan, D., Fellows, C., & Guevara, H. (2008). Emergent approaches to focus group research. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Handbook of emergent methods* (pp. 189-205). New York: The Guilford Press.

Morgan, D. M. (2010). Preservice teachers as writers. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, *49*(4), 352-365.

Morra, S., & Guðbjörnsdóttir, G. (2009). Mental representation of literary characters as a distinct aspect of response to literature. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, *53*(6), 591-615.

Morrison, G. R., & Ross, S. M. (2014). Research-based instructional perspectives. In J. M. Spector, M. D. Merrill, J. Elen & M. J. Bishop (Eds.), *Handbook of research on educational communications and technology* (4th ed.) (pp. 31‒38). New York: Springer.

Moskowitz, G. (1971). Interaction analysis: A new modern language for supervisors. *Foreign Language Annals*, *5*, 211-221.

Motion, A. (2009, March 21). Yet once more, O ye laurels. *The Guardian*. Retrieved January 10, 2010, from http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/mar/21/andrew-motion-poet-laureate

Motion, A. (2012). Keynote speech. NATE Conference. 29 June-1 July 2012. York.

Moxley, J. M., & Stoval, S. (1991). Symposium on creative writing in the K-12 curriculum. *Design for Arts in Education*, *93*(2), 9-10.

Muir, E., Niblett, W. R., Le M. Simpson, A. A., & Newbold Whitfield, G. J., (1937). *Teaching poetry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Munford, R., Sanders, J., Mirfin-Veitch, B., & Conder, J. (2008). Ethics and research: Searching for ethical practice in research. *Ethics and Social Welfare*, *2*(1), 50-66.

Munn, P., & Drever, E. (2004). *Using questionnaires in small-scale research: A beginner's guide* (Rev. ed.). Glasgow: The SCRE Centre, University of Glasgow.

Murphy, A. (2008). *Shakespeare for the people: Working-class readers, 1800-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Murray, D. (1989). Unity and difference: Poetry and criticism. In D. Murray (Ed.), *Literary theory and poetry* (pp. 4-22). London: B. T. Batsford.

Nash, J. (2007). The attitudes of English majors to literary study. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, *14*(1), 77-86.

Nastasi, B. K., Hitchcock, J. H., & Brown, L. M. (2010). An inclusive framework for conceptualizing mixed methods design typologies. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research* (2nd ed.) (pp. 305-338). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

National Association for the Teaching of English. (2007). ICT in English: A NATE

position paper. Retrieved April 8, 2011, from http://www.nate.org.uk/cmsfiles/ict/NATE_Position_Paper_on_ICT_in_English.doc

Naylor, A., & Wood, A. B. (2012). *Teaching poetry: Reading and responding to poetry in the secondary classroom*. Abingdon: Routledge.

NCTE. (2005). *NCTE position statement: On multimodal literacies.* Retrieved March 26, 2011, from http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/multimodalliteracies

NCTE. (2008). *NCTE position statement: Definition of 21st-century literacies*. Retrieved March 26, 2011, from http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/21stcentdefinition

NCTE. (2009). *Teachers as readers: Forming book groups as professionals*. Retrieved October 8, 2014, from http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/teachersasreaders

National Endowment for the Arts. (2007). *To read or not to read: A question of national consequence*. Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts.

National Endowment for the Arts. (2009). *Reading on the rise: A new chapter in American literacy*. Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts.

National Statistics Office. (2014). *Malta in figures: 2014*. Valletta: National Statistics Office.

NAWE. (2010). Teachers as writers. Retrieved November 30, 2014, from http://www.nawe.co.uk/writing-in-education/writers-in-schools/teachers-as-writers.html

Nemerov, H. (1972). *Reflexions on poetry and poetics*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Newby, P. (2014). *Research methods for education* (2nd ed.). Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review, 66*(1), 60-92.

Nicholls, G. (2002). *Developing teaching and learning in higher education*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Nichols, S. L., & Berliner, D. C. (2007). *Collateral damage: How high-stakes testing undermines education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Nightingale, P. (2007). A Level English Literature: Learning and Assessment. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education, 14*(2), 135-144.

Nightingale, P. (2011). Now you see me, now you don't: From reader to student and back again in A-Level English Literature. *English in Education*, *45*(2), 146-160.

Noddings, N. (2003). *Happiness and education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Northcutt, N., & McCoy, D. (2004). *Interactive qualitative analysis: A systems method for qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Oakley, A. (1981). *A survey of the teaching of poetry to children between the ages of ten to thirteen in forty three primary, middle and secondary schools in the East Dorset area*. Unpublished MA Ed dissertation, University of Southampton.

Obied, V. (2007). 'Why did I do nothing?' Poetry and the experiences of bilingual pupils in a mainstream inner-city secondary school. *English in Education*, *41*(3), 37-52.

Obied, V. (2013). Developing poetry pedagogy for EAL learners within inclusive intercultural practices. In S. Dymoke, A. Lambirth & A. Wilson (Eds.), *Making poetry matter: International research on poetry pedagogy* (pp. 143-153). London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Oczkus, L. D. (2007). *Guided writing: Practical lessons, powerful results*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

OECD. (2009). *Creating effective teaching and learning environments: First results from TALIS: Executive summary*. Retrieved October 1, 2010, from http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/43044074.pdf

Ofsted. (2007). *Poetry in schools: A survey of practice, 2006/07*. London: Ofsted.

Ofsted. (2009). *English at the crossroads: An evaluation of English in primary and secondary schools, 2005/08*. London: Ofsted.

Ofsted. (2010, September 30). English survey visits: Generic grade descriptors and supplementary subject-specific guidance for inspectors on making judgements during visits to schools. Retrieved October 7, 2010, from http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/content/download/11184/132349/file/EN%20subject%20guidance%20final%2013-9-10.doc

Ofsted. (2012). *Moving English forward: Action to raise standards in English*. London: Ofsted.

Olsen, R. (2010). Reading and writing through found materials: From modernism to contemporary practice. In P. Middleton & N. Marsh (Eds.), *Teaching modernist*

poetry (pp. 140-157). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

O'Neill, H. J. (2006). Once preferred, now peripheral: Poetry and the national assessment for year 11 students in New Zealand post-primary schools. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, *5*(3), 93-126.

O'Neill, H. J. (2008). *Once preferred, now peripheral: Poetry and pedagogy: The place of poetry in the teaching of English for years 9, 10 and 11 students*. Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag.

Opie, I., & Opie, P. (2001). *The lore and language of schoolchildren*. New York: New York Review of Books. (Original work published 1959)

Owen, N., & Munden, P. (2010). *Class writing: A NAWE research report into the writers-in-schools ecology*. York: NAWE.

Palmer, S., & Corbett, P. (2003) *Literacy: What works?* Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes.

Parini, J. (2005). *The art of teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Parini, J. (2008). *Why poetry matters*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Parkinson, B., & Reid Thomas, H. (2000). *Teaching literature in a second language*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Parry, C. (1972). *English through drama: A way of teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pasquin, L. (2010). Poetry as breath: Teaching student teachers to breathe-out poetry. *LEARNing Landscapes*, *4*(1), 255-263.

Paulson, W. (2001). *Literary culture in a world transformed: A future for the humanities*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Peel, R., & Hargreaves, S. (1995). Beliefs about English: Trends in Australia, England and the United States. *English in Education*, *29*(3), 38-50.

Peel, R., Patterson, A., & Gerlach, J. (2000). *Questions of English: Ethics, aesthetics, rhetoric and the formation of the subject in England, Australia and the United States*. London and New York: Routledge.

Peim, N. (1989). GCSE post-structuralism: It can be done! In M. Burton (Ed.), *Enjoying texts: Using literary theory in the classroom* (pp. 14-26). Cheltenham: Stanley Thornes.

Peim, N. (2009). The elusive object of transformation: English, theory and Bernstein's sociology of education. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, *16*(2), 149-164.

Pellegrino, J., & Hilton, M. (2012). *Education for life and work: Developing transferable knowledge and skills in the 21st century*. Washington, D.C.: National Research Academy.

Pennington, J. L. (2004). Teaching interrupted: The effect of high-stakes testing on literacy instruction in a Texas elementary school. In F. B. Boyd & C. H. Brock (Eds.), *Multicultural and multilingual literacy and language* (pp. 241-261). New York: Guilford Press.

Perry, R. B. (1902). Poetry and philosophy. *The Philosophical Review, 11*(6), 576-591.

Persaud, N. (2010). Interviewing. In N. J. Salkind (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of research design* (pp. 632-636) (Vol. 1). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Peskin, J. (2007). The genre of poetry: Secondary school students' conventional expectations and interpretive operations. *English in Education, 41*(3), 20-36.

Petrosky, A., & Reid, L. (2004). Editorial: Conditions of work in the English/language arts classroom. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 3*(3), 1-7.

Pett, S. (2015, May 8). It's time to take the curriculum back from dead white men. *The Conversation*. Retrieved August 25, 2015 from http://theconversation.com/its-time-to-take-the-curriculum-back-from-dead-white-men-40268

Pike, M. (2000a). Boys, poetry and the individual talent. *English in Education, 34*(3), 41-55.

Pike, M. (2000b). Pupils' poetics. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education, 7*(1), 45-54.

Pike, M. (2004). *Teaching secondary English*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

Pishghadam, R., Adamson, B., Sadafian, S. S., & Kan, F. L. F. (2014). Conceptions of assessment and teacher burnout. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 21*(1), 34-51.

Poon, A. (2007). The politics of pragmatism: Some issues in the teaching of literature in Singapore. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education, 14*(1), 51-59.

Pope, R. (2002). *The English studies book: An introduction to language, literature and culture*. London: Routledge.

Potts, R. (2002, August 10). The praise singer. *The Guardian*. Retrieved May 2, 2010, from http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2002/aug/10/featuresreviews.guardianreview 15

Powell, K. (2006). Inside-out and outside-in: Participant observation in Taiko drumming. In G. Spindler & L. Hammond (Eds.), *Innovation in educational ethnography: Theory, methods, and results* (pp. 33-64). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Powell, S. (2009). Live poets, live poetry: *Poetry Live!*, the anthology, and poetry at GCSE. *English Drama Media*, *13*, 9-12.

Prendergast, M. (2009). Introduction: The phenomena of poetry in research: 'Poem is what?' Poetic inquiry in qualitative social science research. In M. Prendergast, C. Leggo & P. Sameshima (Eds.), *Poetic inquiry: Vibrant voices in the social sciences* (pp. xix-xlii). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Prescott, L. (2012). Life writing and life-learning: An analysis of creative writing students' work. *Studies in Continuing Education*, *34*(2), 145-157.

Prinz, J., & Mandelbaum, E. (2015). Poetic opacity: How to paint things with words. In J. Gibson (Ed.), *The philosophy of poetry* (pp. 63-87). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Probst, R. E. (2004). *Response and analysis: Teaching literature in secondary school* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

PSTEC. (2011). *National cultural policy*. Malta: Parliamentary Secretariat for Tourism, the Environment and Culture. Retrieved January 25, 2012, from www.maltaculture.com/common/file_provider.aspx?id=634503037643808750

Pugliese, C. (2010). *Being creative: The challenge of change in the classroom*. Peaslake, Surrey, England: Delta Publishing.

Pullinger, D. (2012). In living memory: The dying art of learning poetry and a case for revival. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, *19*(4), 383-393.

Pullinger, D., & Whitley, D. (2013). Sounding sense: The place, problems and potential of performance in poetry. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, *20*(2), 160-173.

Purves, A. C. (1973). *Literature education in ten countries*. Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell.

Railton, N. (2015). Lessons in culture: Oral storytelling in a literature classroom. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, *22*(1), 50-59.

Ray, R. (1999). The diversity of poetry: How trainee teachers' perceptions affect their attitudes to poetry teaching. *The Curriculum Journal*, *10*(3), 403-418.

Reddy, S. (2010). What's difficult? In J. M. Wilkinson (Ed.), *Poets on teaching: A sourcebook* (pp. 7-8). Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

Reeves, J. (1958). *Teaching poetry: Poetry in class five to fifteen*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.

Regis, A. (2013, March 21). Why do students fear poetry and how can they access it better? *The Guardian*. Retrieved November 20, 2014, from http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2013/mar/21/world-poetry-day-student-occupy

Reich, G. A., & Bally, D. (2010). Get smart: Facing high-stakes testing together. *The Social Studies*, *101*(4), 179-184.

Reisz, M. (2015, September 19). A-level axe for creative writing prompts fury. *Times Higher Education*. Retrieved October 1, 2015, from https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/level-axe-creative-writing-prompts-fury

Retallack, J., & Spahr, J. (Eds.). (2006). *Poetry and pedagogy: The challenge of the contemporary*. New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Richard, V. M., & Lahman, M. K. E. (2015). Photo-elicitation: Reflexivity on method, analysis, and graphic portraits. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, *38*(1), 3‒22.

Richards, I. A. (1926). *Principles of literary criticism* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Ridenour, C. S., & Newman, I. (2008). *Mixed methods research: Exploring the interactive continuum*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Rijlaarsdam, G., & Van den Bergh, H. (2004). Effective learning and teaching of writing: Student involvement in the teaching of writing. In G. Rijlaarsdam, H. Van den Bergh & M. Couzijn (Eds.), *Effective learning and teaching of writing* (2nd ed.) (pp. 1-16). Boston: Kluwer.

Rinkevich, J. L. (2011). Creative teaching: Why it matters and where to begin. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, *84*(5), 219-223.

Robillard, C., Bach, J., & Gulden, M. (2015). Mindful poetry: Making the strange familiar. *English Journal*, *104*(4), 83-89.

Robinson, K. (2011). *Out of our minds: Learning to be creative* (Rev. ed.). Chichester: Capstone Publishing.

Robinson, K., & Aronica, L. (2015). *Creative schools: The grassroots revolution that's transforming education* [Kindle version]. Retrieved from amazon.com

Robson, C. (2012). *Heart beats: Everyday life and the memorized poem*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Robson, J. (2006). *Teacher professionalism in further and higher education*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Rodrigues, R. J., & Badaczewski, D. (1978). *A guidebook for teaching literature*. Harlow: Allyn & Bacon.

Rosen, M. (1998). *Did I hear you write?* (2nd ed.). Five Leaves Press: Nottingham.

Rosenberg, M. (2013). *Spotlight on learning styles: Teacher strategies for learner success*. Peaslake: Delta ELT Publishing.

Rosenblatt, L. (1994). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1995). *Literature as exploration* (5th ed.). New York: MLA.

Rubadiri, D. (1989). *Growing up with poetry: An anthology for secondary schools*. Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers.

Sæbø, A. B. (2009). Challenges and possibilities in Norwegian classroom drama practice. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, *14*(2), 279-294.

Sammut, L. A. (1999). *Analysis and evaluation of performances in the MATSEC May 1997 English Literature core paper (Paper 1)*. Unpublished BEd (Hons) dissertation, University of Malta.

Sautter, R. C. (1991). Writing as a community-building activity. *The School Community Journal*, *1*(1), 21-26.

Schillinger, T., Meyer, T., & Vinz, R. (2010). Poetry immersion: Reading, writing and performing with secondary students. *English in Education*, *44*(2), 109-125.

Sciriha, L., & Vassallo, M. (2006). *Living languages in Malta*. Malta: Print It Printing Services.

SED. (1968). *The teaching of literature* (Bulletin No. 2). Edinburgh: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Scott, P. (1989). *Reconstructing 'A' level English*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Scruton, R. (2011). *Beauty: A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sedgwick, F. (2003). *Teaching poetry*. London: Continuum.

Shelley, P. B. (1840). *Essays, letters from abroad, translations and fragments* (Vol. 1). M. W. Shelley (Ed.). Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard.

Shepherd, J. (2010, January 7). Too much rap, not enough proper poetry, says former laureate. *The Guardian*. Retrieved January 10, 2010, from http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2010/jan/07/poetry-teaching-andrew-motion

Short, M., & Candlin, C. (1988). Teaching study skills for English literature. In M. Short (Ed.), *Reading, analysing and teaching literature* (pp. 178-203). London: Longman.

Showalter, E. (2003). *Teaching literature*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Sidney, P. (1891). *A defence of poesie and poems*. D. Price (Ed.). London: Cassell & Company.

Simic, C. (1989). Notes on poetry and philosophy. *New Literary History*, *21*(1), 215-221.

Simmerman, S., Harward, S., Pierce, L., Peterson, N., Morrison, T., Korth, B., Billen, M., & Shumway, J. (2012). Elementary teachers' perceptions of process writing. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, *51*(4), 292-307.

Simmons, A. (2014, April 8). Why teaching poetry is so important. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved August 15, 2015, from http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/04/why-teaching-poetry-is-so-important/360346/

Simon, M. It sounds good to my ears: Making poetry come alive in the classroom. In C. Smallwood, C. S. Harris & C. Brackett-Vincent (Eds.), *Women on poetry: Writing, revising, publishing and teaching* (pp. 92-97). Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company.

Simpson, M., & Tuson, J. (2003). *Using observations in small-scale research: A beginner's guide* (Rev. ed.). Glasgow: The SCRE Centre, University of Glasgow.

Sinclair, J., & Coulthard, M. (1975). *Towards an analysis of discourse*. Oxford:

Oxford University Press.

Skelton, R. (1978). *Poetic truth*. London: Heinemann.

Sloan, G. (2003). *Give them poetry!* New York, NY: Teachers College.

Smith, K. (2008, February). Taking the fear out of teaching poetry. *Nate Classroom*, *4*, 6-8.

Smith, F., Hardman, F., & Higgins, S. (2006). The impact of interactive whiteboards on teacher–pupil interaction in the national literacy and numeracy strategies. *British Educational Research Journal*, *32*(3), 443–457.

Smith, M. W., & Connolly, W. (2005). The effects of interpretive authority on classroom discussions of poetry: Lessons from one teacher. *Communication Education*, *54*(4), 271-288.

Snapper, G. (2006a). Beyond *Dead Poets Society*: Developing literary awareness at A Level. *English Drama Media*, 6, 27-31.

Snapper, G. (2006b). Demystifying poetry: Classroom investigations. *English Drama Media*, 6, 32.

Snapper, G. (2007). Beyond Curriculum 2000: Some national and international perspectives on A Level English Literature. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, *14*(1), 13-29.

Snapper, G. (2009a). Beyond English Literature A Level: The silence of the seminar? *English in Education*, *43*(3), 192-210.

Snapper, G. (2009b). Editorial. *English Drama Media*, 13, 2-3.

Snapper, G. (2013). Exploring resistance to poetry in advanced English studies. In S. Dymoke, A. Lambirth & A. Wilson (Eds.), *Making poetry matter: International research on poetry pedagogy* (pp. 31-41). London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Spada, N., & Fröhlich, M. (1995). *The communicative orientation of language teaching observation scheme: Coding conventions and applications*. Sydney: Macquarie University.

Spiro, J. (1991). Assessing literature: Four papers. In C. Brumfit (Ed.), *Assessment in literature teaching* (pp. 16-83). London: Macmillan.

Spiro, J. (2004). *Creative poetry writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sprackland, J. (2008, February). The Poetry Archive. *NATE Classroom*, *4*, 30.

Sprackland, J. (2009). The ear is the best reader. *English Drama Media*, *13*, 21-23.

Spurr, B. (2004). *Wilfred Owen: HSC standard English*. Glebe: Pascal Press.

Stables, A. (2002). Poetic experience: Found or made? *English in Education*, *36*(3), 28-36.

Stafford, P. M. (2010). Creativity or compliance: Should teacher educators do more to support aspiring teachers' emergent professional voices? *English in Education*, *44*(1), 27-44.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Starfield, S. (2010). Ethnographies. In B. Paltridge & A. Phakiti (Eds.), *Continuum companion to research in applied linguistics* (pp. 50-65). London & New York: Continuum.

Statt, D. A. (2003). *A student's dictionary of psychology*. Hove: Psychology Press.

Steiner, G. (1978). *On difficulty and other essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stevens, D. (2001). What do we mean by teaching literature in secondary English? In J. Williamson, M. Fleming, F. Hardman & D. Stevens (Eds.), *Meeting the standards in secondary English* (pp. 96-124). London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Stevens, D. (2005). Literacy and citizenship: an intercultural perspective. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, *12*(2), 253-263.

Stevens, D. (2007). 'Draw your own conclusions': Teaching pre-twentieth century poetry in an arts context. *English in Education*, *41*(3), 54-66.

Stevens, D. (2010). A Freirean critique of the competence model of teacher education, focusing on the standards for qualified teacher status in England. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, *36*(2), 187-196.

Stevens, D. (2011a). Critically enlightened Romantic values and English pedagogy: A response to Peter Medway. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, 18(1), 45-56.

Stevens, D. (2011b). *Cross-curricular teaching and learning in the secondary school: English: The centrality of language in learning*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Stevens, D. (2014). Critical literacy through Initial Teacher Education in English. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, *21*(1), 32-41.

Stevens, D., Cliff Hodges, G., Gibbons, S., Hunt, P., & Turvey, A. (2006). Transformations in learning and teaching through Initial Teacher Education. *Literacy*, *40*(2), 97-105.

Stevens, D., & McGuinn, N. (2004). *The art of teaching secondary English: Innovative and creative approaches*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Stevens, W. (1957). *Opus posthumous*. S. French Morse (Ed.). London: Faber and Faber.

Stevens, W. (1960). *The necessary angel*. London: Faber and Faber.

Stevens, W. (1996). *The letters of Wallace Stevens*. H. Stevens (Ed.). Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Stewart, D. W., Shamdasani, P. M., & Rook, D. W. (2007). *Focus groups: Theory and practice* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Stibbs, A. (2000). Can you (almost) read a poem backwards and view a painting upside down? Restoring aesthetics to poetry teaching. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, *34*(2), 37-47.

Stotsky, S., & Mall, C. (2003). Understanding research on teaching the English language arts: An introduction for teachers. In J. Flood, D. Lapp, J.R. Squire & J.M. Jensen (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching the English language arts* (2nd ed.) (pp. 133-142). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Stovall, D. (2006). Urban poetics: Poetry, social justice and critical pedagogy in education. *The Urban Review*, *38*(1), 63-80.

Stratta, L., Dixon, J., & Wilkinson, A. (1973). *Patterns of language: Explorations of the teaching of English*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.

Strauss, P. (1993). *Talking poetry*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.

Street, C., & Stang, K. (2008). Improving the teaching of writing across the curriculum: A model for teaching in-service secondary teachers to write. *Action in Teacher Education*, *30*(1), 37-49.

Sunderland, J. (2004). Classroom interaction, gender, and foreign language learning. In B. Norton & K. Toohey (Eds.), *Critical pedagogies and language learning* (pp. 222-241). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sullivan, A. M. (2005). Lessons from the Anhinga trail: Poetry and teaching. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, *107*, 23-32.

Sumara, D., Davis, B., & Iftody, T. (2006). Normalizing literary responses in the teacher education classroom. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, *13*(1), 55-67.

Szirtes, G. (2014, June 2). Jeremy Paxman doesn't see that poetry is felt, not fathomed. *The Guardian*. Retrieved January 5, 2015, from

http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jun/02/jeremy-paxman-poetry-newsnight

Tangen, R. (2014). Balancing ethics and quality in educational research: The ethical matrix method. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, *58*(6), 678-694.

Taras, M. (2005). Assessment: Summative and formative: Some theoretical reflections. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, *53*(4), 466-478.

Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *Foundations of mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Templer, B. (2009). Poetry in motion: A multimodal teaching tool. *Humanising Language Teaching*, *11*(5). Retrieved April 4, 2011, from http://www.hltmag.co.uk/oct09/sart06.htm

Tew, P., & Addis, M. (2007). Survey on teaching contemporary British fiction. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, *14*(3), 313-324.

The Poetry Trust. (2010, March). *The poetry toolkit: Foolproof recipes for teaching poetry in the classroom*. Halesworth: The Poetry Trust.

Theune, M., & Broad, B. (2015). The poetry of evaluation: Helping students explore how they value verse. In G. Harper (Ed.), *Creative writing and education* (pp. 171-182). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Thompson, D. (1978). *The uses of poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thomson, L. (2013). Learning to teach creative writing. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, *20*(1), 45-52.

Tippings, L. (2008). Enlivening the study of poetry with Year 8. In NATE, *Making hard topics in English easier with ICT* (pp. 45-47). Retrieved March 27, 2011, from

http://www.nate.org.uk/cmsfiles/ict/h2t/NATE_Hard_to_Teach_Case_Studies.pdf

Tompkins, G. E. (2008). *Teaching writing: Balancing process and product* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

Torgerson, C., & Zhu, D. (2003). A systematic review and meta-analysis of the effectiveness of ICT on literacy learning in English, 5-16. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

Tracy, E. (2006). *The student's guide to exam success* (2nd ed.). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Tuchaai, T., O'Neill, M., & Sharplin, E. (2012). Adapting to curriculum change: A theoretical framework informing the design and implementation of a curriculum intervention. *English in Education*, *46*(2), 155-174.

Tunnicliffe, S. (1984). *Poetry experience: Teaching and writing poetry in secondary schools*. London: Methuen.

Turvey, A. (2007). Writing and teaching writing. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, *14*(2), 145-159.

Tweddle, S., Adams, A., Clarke, S., Scrimshaw, P., & Walton, S. (1997). *English for tomorrow*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Twist, C. (1989). 'Through a fine web': A post-structuralist approach to working on a text with younger pupils. In M. Burton (Ed.), *Enjoying texts: Using literary theory in the classroom* (pp. 27-30). Cheltenham: Stanley Thornes.

Tyson, L. (2015). *Critical theory today: A user-friendly guide* (3rd ed.). Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

UKLA. (2008). Teachers as readers: Building communities of readers: 2007-2008 executive summary. Leicester: United Kingdom Literacy Association. Retrieved October 8, 2014, from www.ukla.org/download.php?file=/downloads/teachers_as_readers.pdf

University of Buffalo Graduate School of Education. (2009). *City voices, city visions*. Retrieved March 11, 2011, from http://gse.buffalo.edu/org/cityvoices/

University of York Department of Education. (2015). *MPhil and PhD programme handbook 2015-16*. Retrieved September 25, 2015, from http://www.york.ac.uk/media/educationalstudies/documents/intranet-postgraduate/MPhil%20and%20PhD%20handbook%202015-16.pdf

Unsworth, L. (2001). *Teaching multiliteracies across the curriculum: Changing contexts of text and image in classroom practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Unsworth, L., Thomas, A., Simpson, A., & Asha, J. (2005). *Children's literature and computer based teaching*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Uysal, H. H., & Bardakci, M. (2014). Teacher beliefs and practices of grammar teaching: Focusing on meaning, form, or forms? *South African Journal of Education*, *34*(1), 1-16.

Vakil, A. (2008). Teaching creative writing. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, *15*(2), 157-165.

Vella Briffa, P., & Xerri, D. (2013). Explicating an English speaking examination: Challenges and considerations. *Symposia Melitensia*, *9*, 193-208.

Vetter, A. (2011). A writing assignment extended: An occasion for young people to construct writer identities. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, *18*(2), 187-197.

Vico, G. (1968). *The new science of Giambattista Vico* (Rev. ed.). (T. Goddard Bergin & M. H. Fisch, Trans.). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Wagner, E. (2010). Survey research. In B. Paltridge & A. Phakiti (Eds.), *Continuum companion to research in applied linguistics* (pp. 22-38). London & New York: Continuum.

Wainwright, J. (2004). *Poetry: The basics*. London and New York: Routledge.

Wales, P. (2009). Positioning the drama teacher: Exploring the power of identity in teaching practices. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, *14*(2), 261-278.

Walter, J., & Türksoy, B. (2007). *Poetry in the English class-room*. Munich: GRIN Verlag.

Waterhouse, P., & Dickinson, C. (2001). *Classroom management* (Rev. ed.). Stafford: Network Educational Press.

Weaven, M., & Clark, T. (2011). Evolution and contingency: Poetry, curriculum and culture in Victoria, Australia. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, *18*(1), 75-84.

Weaven, M., & Clark, T. (2013). I guess it scares us – Teachers discuss the teaching of poetry in senior secondary English. *English in Education*, *47*(3), 197-212.

Weldon, F. (2009). On assessing creative writing. *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*, *6*(3), 168-174.

Whatley, L. (2003). That's how my students feel! In M. Commeyras, B.S. Bisplinghoff & J. Olson (Eds.), *Teachers as readers: Perspectives on the importance of reading in teachers' classrooms and lives* (pp. 54-63). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Whitehead, F. (1966). *The disappearing dais: A study of the principles and practice of English teaching*. London: Chatto and Windus.

Widdowson, H. (1975). *Stylistics and the teaching of literature*. Harlow: Longman.

Williams, T. O. (2011). A poetry therapy model for the literature classroom. *Journal of Poetry Therapy: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Practice, Theory, Research and Education*, *24*(1), 17-33.

Williams, T. O. (2012). *A therapeutic approach to teaching poetry: Individual development, psychology, and social reparation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Williams, W. R. (2015). Every voice matters: Spoken word poetry in and outside of school. *English Journal*, *104*(4), 77-82.

Wilson, A. (2009). Creativity and constraint: Developing as a writer of poetry. In R. Beard, D. Myhill, M. Nystrand, & J. Riley (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of writing development* (pp. 387-401). London: SAGE Publications.

Wilson, A. (2010). Teachers' conceptualisations of the intuitive and the intentional in poetry composition. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, *9*(3), 53-74.

Wilson, A. (2013). A joyous lifeline in a target-driven job: Teachers' metaphors of teaching poetry writing. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *43*(1), 69-87.

Wilson, P. (2011). Creative writing and critical response in the university literature class. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, *48*(4), 439-446.

Wing-yi Cheng, R., Lam, S., & Chung-yan Chan, J. (2008). When high achievers and low achievers work in the same group: The roles of group heterogeneity and processes in project-based learning. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *78*(2), 205-221.

Winston, J. (2015). *Transforming the teaching of Shakespeare with the Royal Shakespeare Company*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare.

Wiseman, A. (2009). 'When you do your best, there's someone to encourage you': Adolescents' views of family literacy. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, *53*(2), 132-142.

Wiseman, A. (2011). Powerful students, powerful words: Writing and learning in a poetry workshop. *Literacy*, *45*(2), 70-77.

Wissman, K. K., & Wiseman, A. M. (2011). 'That's my worst nightmare': Poetry and trauma in the middle school classroom. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, *6*(3), 234-249.

Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical investigations*. G. E. M. Anscombe & R. Rhees (Eds.). (G. E. M. Anscombe, Trans.). Oxford: Blackwell.

Woodward, T. (2015). A framework for learning creativity. In A. Maley & N. Peachey (Eds.), *Creativity in the English language classroom* (pp. 150-157). London: British Council.

Woolnough, P. (2009). More than one way to teach a lesson. In C. Evans, A. Midgley, P. Rigby, L. Warham & P. Woolnough (Eds.), *Teaching English* (pp. 54-76). London: SAGE Publications.

Wordsworth, W. (1802). *Lyrical ballads with pastoral and other poems* (Vol. 1). London: T. N. Longman and O. Rees.

Wragg, E. C. (1999). *An introduction to classroom observation* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Wright, T. (2005). *How to be a brilliant English teacher*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Wyn, J. (2009). *Touching the future: Building skills for life and work*. Victoria: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Wyse, D., & Jones, R. (2002). Circular arguments: Teachers and texts. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, *9*(1), 77-84.

Xerri, D. (2009). *Candidates' performance in the Matriculation Certificate English examination: An investigation*. Unpublished MEd dissertation, University of Malta.

Xerri, D. (2010a). *Seamus Heaney's early work: Poetic responsibility and the Troubles*. Dublin: Maunsel and Co.

Xerri, D. (2010b). *Ted Hughes's art of healing*. Palo Alto, CA: Academica Press.

Xerri, D. (2011). Shared writing via contemporary poetry. *English in Education*, *45*(2), 175-188.

Xerri, D. (2012a). Multicultural poetry in ELT: Benefits, challenges and strategies. In P. Díez, R. Place & O. Fernández Vicente (Eds.), *Plurilingualism: Promoting co-operation between communities, people and nations* (pp. 65-79). Bilbao: University of Deusto.

Xerri, D. (2012b). Poetry on the subway: An interview with children's poet John Rice. *New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship*, *18*(2), 105-115.

Xerri, D. (2012c). Poetry teaching and multimodality: Theory into practice. *Creative Education, 3*(4), 507-512.

Xerri, D. (2012d). The multimodal approach to using poetry in ELT. In T. Pattison (Ed.), *IATEFL 2011: Brighton conference selections* (pp. 151-152). Canterbury: IATEFL.

Xerri, D. (2013a). Colluding in the 'torture' of poetry: Shared beliefs and assessment. *English in Education*, *47*(2), 134-146.

Xerri, D. (2013b). 'Dissecting butterflies': Literary theory and poetry teaching in post-16 education. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, *18*(4), 205-214.

Xerri, D. (2013c). Poetry writing in the post-16 English curriculum. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, *12*(2), 140-155.

Xerri, D. (2013d, Autumn). The value of creativity: Language teachers as creative practitioners. *Teaching English*, *3*, 23-25.

Xerri, D. (2014a). Critical reading and student engagement with poetry. In S. Dymoke, M. Barrs, A. Lambirth & A. Wilson (Eds.), *Making poetry happen: Transforming the poetry classroom* (pp. 29-35). London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Xerri, D. (2014b). English teachers positioning themselves as poets. *The ETAS Journal*, *32*(1), 25-27.

Xerri, D. (2014c). 'Poetry is a tremendous ally': Children's poet Michael Rosen on teachers' attitudes towards poetry. *New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship*, *20*(2), 112-122.

Xerri, D. (2014d). Schools as 'poetry-friendly places': Michael Rosen on poetry in the curriculum. *Arts Education Policy Review*, *115*(4), 151-158.

Xerri, D. (2015a). Countering the hegemonic English curriculum: Intercultural competence through poetry. In D. Broudy, J. Klaehn & J. Winter (Eds.), *News from somewhere: A reader in communication and challenges to globalization* (pp. 39-47). Eugene, OR: Wayzgoose Press.

Xerri, D. (2015b). On owing one's poetic life to inspiring teachers of English. *The Use of English*, *67*(1), 39-44.

Xerri, D. (in press-a). Igniting young people's creativity: The Sydney Story Factory. *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*.

Xerri, D. (in press-b). 'Poems look like a mathematical equation': Assessment in poetry education. *International Journal of English Studies*.

Xerri, D. (in press-c). Poetry education research as an anchorage of thought: Using poetry as interview stimulus material. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*.

Xerri, D. (in press-d). Teachers' beliefs and literature teaching: The case of poetry. In B. Schaff, C. Surkamp & J. Schlegel (Eds.), *The institution of literature: 250 years of English Studies and cultural transfer*. Göttingen: University of Göttingen.

Xerri, D., & Agius, S. (2005). *An analysis of the English poetry syllabus for forms 1 and 2 in area secondary schools*. Unpublished PGCE long essay, University of Malta.

Xerri, D., & Vella Briffa, P. (in press-a). Teacher-designed high stakes English language testing: Washback and impact. In Patrick Ng & Esther Boucher-Yip (Eds.), *Teacher agency and policy response in English Language Teaching*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Xerri, D., & Vella Briffa, P. (in press-b). Teacher involvement in high stakes testing. In C. Docherty & F. Barker (Eds.), *Language assessment for multilingualism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Xerri, D., & Xerri Agius, S. (2015). Galvanizing empathy through poetry. *English Journal*, *104*(4), 71-76.

Yanow, D., & Schwartz-Shea, P. (Eds.) (2015). *Interpretation and method: Empirical research methods and the interpretive turn* (2nd ed.). Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Yates, C. (1999). *Jumpstart: Poetry in the secondary school*. London: Poetry Society.

Yazedjian, A., & Kolkhorst, B. B. (2007). Implementing small-group activities in large lecture classes. *College Teaching*, *55*(4), 164-169.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Zammit, M., & Mifsud, C. (2003). Language learning and teaching in Malta. In D. Newby (Ed.), *Mediating between theory and practice in the context of different learning cultures and languages* (pp. 137-148). Graz: Council of Europe.

Zapruder, M. (2012, December 6). The difference between poetry and song lyrics. *Boston Review*. Retrieved September 20, 2013, from http://bostonreview.net/forum/poetry-brink/difference-between-poetry-and-song-lyrics

Zeni, J. (1998). A guide to ethical issues and action research. *Educational Action Research*, *6*(1), 9-19.

Zhao, Y. (2014). L2 creative writers' identities: Their cognitive writing processes and sense of empowerment. *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*, *11*(3), 452-466.

Zhou, A. A., Busch, M., & Cumming, A. (2013). Do adult ESL learners' and their teachers' goals for improving grammar in writing correspond? *Language Awareness*, *23*(3), 234-254.