The Sunne Rising

BUSIE old foole, unruly Sunne,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windowes, and through curtaines call on us?
Must to thy motions lovers seasons run?

Sawcy pedantique wretch, goe chide 5
Late schoole boyes, and sowre prentices,
Goe tell Court-huntsmen, that the King will ride,
Call countrey ants to harvest offices;
Love, all alike, no season knowes, nor clyme,
Nor hours, dayes, moneths, which are the rags of time. 10

Thy beames, so reverend, and strong
Why shouldst thou thinke?
I could eclipse and cloud them with a winke,
But that I would not lose her sight so long:
If her eyes have not blinded thine, 15
Looke, and to morrow late, tell mee,
Whether both the ‘India’s of spice and Myne
Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with mee.
Aske for those Kings whom thou saw’st yesterday,
And thou shalt heare, All here in one bed lay. 20

She’is all States, and all Princes, I,
Nothing else is.
Princes doe but play us; compar’d to this,
All honor’s mimique; All wealth alchimie.
Thou sunne art halfe as happy’as wee, 25
In that the world’s contracted thus;
Thine age askes ease, and since thy duties bee
To warme the world, that’s done in warming us.
Shine here to us, and thou art every where;
This bed thy center is, these walls, thy sphære.
Approaching an unseen poem

The Sunne Rising' by John Donne

The task

In groups, you’re going to pool your knowledge and approach this John Donne poem as an ‘unseen’ text. This means that you’re going to take it apart yourselves with minimal help from your teacher, with a view to providing a written analysis of the poem (once you’ve understood it).

Step one!

First things first. In groups, read the poem aloud. You could designate one confident reader to take you through the whole thing, or split the poem up into sections with each group member reading a little bit. It doesn’t really matter how you do it - the important thing is to start to get a sense of how your poem sounds and ‘feels’ when it’s read.

First impressions

Now that you’ve read the poem, have a quick discussion about it. What is it about? Can you summarise each stanza in one sentence? What words are particularly: a) descriptive b) confusing? Does the poem rhyme? If so, how? At this point, you should also point out to the group anything else you notice about the poem - however ‘trivial’ it might sound.

Once you’ve had some discussions as a group, use the inference rectangle to help you take the poem apart and record your initial thoughts.

A closer look

Now discuss and make notes on the following questions:

Stanza 1

- In this poem, the poet is talking to the sun. In stanza 1, what does he think about the sun waking him up? What words does he use to describe the sun?
- Is the poet alone? How do you know? Who do you think he might be with? (NB: the clue here is in line 4.)
- What does the poet tell the sun to go away and do?
- At the end of stanza 1, what does the poet say about love?

Stanza 2

- In stanza 2, how is the poet cheeky to the sun?
- Why does he tell the sun that he is reluctant to close his eyes?
- With the words ‘Looke’ and ‘tell mee’ what does the poet want the sun to do?
Approaching an unseen poem

‘The Sunne Rising’ by John Donne

Stanza 3

- In stanza 3, what does the poet say about his lover and love itself?
- How happy does he think the sun is, in comparison to himself?
- In stanza 3, the poet seems to have a change of heart and he invites the sun back again. How has he turned the argument round? Compared to the first stanza, how has he changed the way he speaks to the sun?
- Now that you’ve read the poem, do you think it’s about the sun, or something else?
- Write down one or two sentences on form (how the poem is structured) and rhyme/rhythm?

Unanswered questions

What questions do you still have about the poem? Individually, write down one or two questions that you’d like to have clarification on. Then, as a group, discuss each person’s questions and see whether you can provide answers. Any questions that are left unanswered can be tackled by the rest of the class when your teacher takes feedback.

Planning a written response

Once your group is confident that they understand the poem’s topic matter and how it works/is put together, you’re ready to construct a written response to it. Your task now is to put together a group plan which tackles the question: ‘Explore how John Donne presents ideas about love in his poem ‘The Sunne Rising’. Use evidence from the poem to support your answer.’

Remember, you aren’t (at this point) being asked to answer the question, simply to provide a plan which will enable you to answer the question. As a group, decide how you want your plan to appear and work. Are you, for example going to use a diagram? Bullet point the content of each paragraph? Do something different? Remember to isolate quotations too, as these will support each of your points.

Taking it further

Now that you’ve planned it, it’s likely that your teacher may ask you to write the essay. If so, remember to stick to your group’s plan and analyse your quotations as fully as you feel able.
Approaching an unseen poem

Look at the rectangles below and try to complete each one in turn.
Discuss aspects of the grid with a partner if you need to.

What other aspects of the poem would I like/do I need to find out more about?

What phrases/words/lines am I confused or unsure about?

What does this poem make me think about?

What is this poem definitely about?