

# Different Writers Different Times

## Key Stage 3 > Year 9

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<b>&gt; Framework Objective R9</b> Compare themes and styles of two writers from different times	<b>&gt; Framework Objective R12</b> Analyse and discuss the use made of rhetorical devices in a text
<b>&gt; Framework Objective WV7</b> Recognise layers of meaning in the writer's choice of words	<b>&gt; Framework Objective W8</b> Write within the discipline of different poetic forms, exploring how form contributes to meaning

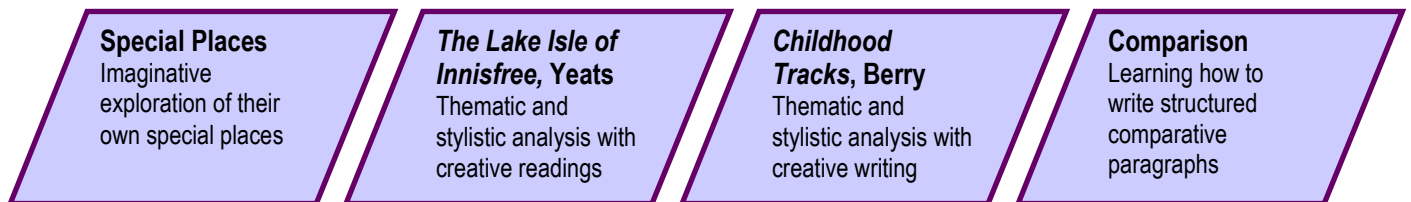
## Icon

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> Historic Recordings > Where Next?

## Overview

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## Introduction

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This sequence of activities is designed to form a self-contained project lasting several lessons. Its primary focus is on the thematic and stylistic comparison of two poems from different times; its pedagogical method is to give students a mixture of creative “play” with two poems and a structured approach to stylistic analysis, in the belief that the combination helps to develop richer, multi-layered readings, as well as providing different access points for students.

Much of the material here relies on traditional teaching methods, with the only technological spin being the need to open and play the recordings on the Poetry Archive webpages.

There are oral and written outcomes including poetry performance, writing a poem within constraints, and formal literary analysis.

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## Key concepts

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### **Theme**

The issues and ideas that a poem raises about the nature of human experience; the more sophisticated answer to the question “what’s it about?”.

### **Style**

The writer’s characteristic use of language: specifically, words, images, rhetorical devices, and sounds.

### **Form**

The features that create the shape of the poem. Ideas about form can include genre, stanza type, structure or organising principle, line length patterns, rhyme and rhythm.

# Different Writers Different Times

## Activities

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### 1. Special Places

Imaginative development work to inform readings of the poems and prepare for the later writing task.

- Have “special places” on the board or on screen and invite discussion of what this phrase might mean to different people
- Invite paired discussion of their own “special places”, then each person to pick one, the memory of which they think they will most cherish in later life
- Silent individual work, perhaps with eyes closed at times: students to note words or phrases in response to questions. If you use these question forms and in this order, the activity will link more strongly to later reading of the Berry poem. In this special place, what are you eating? What are you drinking? What are you smelling? What are you hearing? What are you seeing?
- Invite paired review of notes and ideas, adding new ones as they arise. If this needs more structuring, the first response could be words/phrases the listener liked and why, the second questions, the third comparisons with their own ideas; then swap roles.
- Finish by asking each person to contribute a word they would use to describe how they feel when they think about their favourite place. Write these down independently first to avoid getting one response and twenty-nine “me too”s. Keep this word wall for later comparison with the moods of the poems under consideration.

### 2. *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*, W.B. Yeats

- Give pupils copies of the poem and open the Poetry Archive webpage for this poem. Play the introduction Yeats gives to his poem, but not his reading of it. Contextualise this in relation to previous “special places” work.
- Talk about different ways of reciting a poem: a single reader, different readers taking different parts, a reader and echoing by others (think Gladys Knight and the Pips); perhaps also different systems for a reading, such as signing; also, intonation, pace, rhythm, emphasis, etc.
- Students work in groups of 3 to prepare a reading of the poem that they think best suits its mood and meaning (link back to moods word wall). Select groups with contrasting or interesting approaches to perform their version for the class.
- Play the Poetry Archive recording of Yeats reading the poem, and invite comparisons and responses. You could focus this with class discussion of some of the observations in the notes on the poem: “written in a yearning voice”, “tranquil rhythm”, “Yeats’ quavering incantation has a unique power of its own”.
- Review what students have learned from preparing their readings of the poem: who is the speaker? What situation is s/he in or thinking about? What settings are significant and why? If the broad theme is “special places”, what does Yeats’ poem make you think or feel about this?
- Students now work in small groups on an investigation of Yeats’ style and form. You could use the headings and activities in the table below, encouraging lots of annotation and discussion.
- To pull this together, invite each group to choose the 3-5 features they found most interesting, and to write one clear sentence about each. Pool these on the board and save for the comparative activity to come.
- Finish this by reflecting again on the meaning and mood of the poem. You could do this by inviting class discussion of whether or not they think the speaker does “arise and go now”. If so, invite speculation about what happens when he gets there; if not, why not and what happens?

# Different Writers Different Times

## Investigating a Poem's Style and Form

<h3>WORDS</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Select one key word from each line, the one you think carries the most meaning, then explore why each one is important and any patterns in the key words</li><li>• What <i>connotations</i> do these key words carry? What do they make you think or feel in addition to their <i>literal</i> meaning?</li><li>• Are there any unusual words? What makes them unusual? Are they <i>archaic</i>, or words of the poet's invention, or words from a particular <i>variety of English</i>? What do these words make you think or feel?</li><li>• Are there any words that suggest a particular attitude? The kinds of words that often convey attitudes include <i>evaluative adjectives, adverbs, and modal verbs</i>. How do these words contribute to the mood or meaning of the poem?</li></ul>	<h3>SOUND</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Has the poet made use of <i>alliteration</i> or <i>assonance</i>? You could circle or colour code examples of this. How does this use of sounds contribute to the mood or meaning of the poem?</li><li>• Are there any noticeable sound patterns in all or parts of the poem? For example, does the poet use words with long or short <i>vowel sounds</i>, 'hard' or 'soft' <i>consonant sounds</i>? Is there a dominant kind of sound pattern, or is it variable? What do these sound patterns contribute to the mood or meaning of the poem?</li><li>• Is there any use made of <i>onomatopoeia</i>? What does this make you think or feel?</li><li>• How would you describe the <i>tone</i> of the speaker's voice? Angry? Sad? Joyful?</li></ul>
<h3>IMAGES</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Try colour-coding the poem to find out which of the 5 senses the poet has evoked: seeing, hearing, smelling, touching and tasting. What do you notice? How does this <i>imagery</i> contribute to the mood or meaning of the poem?</li></ul>	<h3>RHYME &amp; RHYTHM</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does the poem make use of a <i>rhyme scheme</i>? If there is one, what is it? Whether there is or there isn't, what does the poet's choice make you think or feel?</li><li>• Is there a regular <i>metre</i>, or does the rhythm rely on other elements such as <i>speech patterns, line lengths</i> or <i>emphasis</i>? Either way, what effect does it have in the poem on mood or meaning?</li></ul>
<h3>RHETORICAL DEVICES</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Has the poet used any <i>similes, metaphors, or personification</i>? How do these contribute to the mood or meaning?</li><li>• What <i>repetition</i> is there of words, phrases or other language structures? How does this repetition contribute to the mood or meaning of the poem?</li><li>• Are there any significant <i>contrasts</i> in the poem? What are they? How do they contribute to the mood or meaning?</li></ul>	<h3>FORM</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does each stanza have the same number of lines? What effect does this regularity or irregularity have on mood or meaning?</li><li>• How are the ideas of the poem organised? Does each stanza explore a different thought, or do ideas flow between stanzas? Is there a sequence of ideas? How does the poem start? End? What's in between? Why do you think this pattern is used?</li></ul>

## Different Writers Different Times

### 3. *Childhood Tracks*, James Berry

- Give pupils copies of the poem and open the Poetry Archive webpage for this poem. Contextualise in relation to “special places” and James Berry’s Jamaican childhood (see notes about the poet on the webpage). Play the recording and invite immediate responses, perhaps by asking the first person to contribute a similarity to the Yeats poem, the second a difference, the third something they liked about it, the fourth something they weren’t sure about, and the fifth carte blanche to say what they like. Repeat as many times as you like.
- Play the recording a few more times, or have students working in groups around a PC, each time asking new questions to establish the basics: who is the speaker? What situation is s/he in or thinking about? What settings are significant and why? If the broad theme is “special places”, what does Berry’s poem make you think or feel about this?
- Review the ideas generated by this and play the recording one final time in the whole class setting, prompting one or two word responses to the question of how they think the description of Berry’s “special place” is designed to make them feel. Compare with the mood wall generated in the first activity.
- Next, have students investigating the style and form of the poem in detail, as before.
- When they have done this, invite them to write their own “Childhood Tracks” poem using the template below, their notes on Berry’s style, and the words and moods generated individually and collectively in the opening activities.
- You could finish with some students reading their poems to the class, and reflection on where the challenges lay in writing in this form and how form shapes or embodies aspects of the meaning. The long line-short line rhythm of Berry’s poem, for example, could be regarded as a wave-like rhythm that emulates the sea, referred to only in the last line but a constant presence in a small island nation. How did this work in their own poems? Did it? Or was it the wrong rhythm for their own “special place” memories?

### 4. Comparing the Two Poems

- Students to have copies of both poems in front of them, and webpages for both poems open. Play the two recordings again, with students asked to focus on similarities and differences in the way they have explored the “special places” theme.
- Discuss ideas about this and model how to write a comparative paragraph, using key connectors such as whereas, however, similarly, and a Point Example Explanation type structure.
- Go back to the list of statements about Yeats’ style pooled when working on *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*. Invite students to start by sorting these under the headings used: words, images, sounds, rhetorical devices, and rhyme and rhythm. Then invite them to select one statement from at least 3 of the headings, compare the point with Berry’s style, and write a comparative paragraph.
- If you want to take it further, these paragraphs could be worked up into an essay comparing the themes and styles of the two writers, or they could be used separately as text for a classroom display about the poems.

## Different Writers Different Times

### Childhood Tracks

Eating	<i>[long line]</i>
Eating	<i>[long line]</i>
...	<i>[short line]</i>
Eating	<i>[long line]</i>
...	<i>[short line]</i>
Drinking	<i>[long line]</i>
...	<i>[short line]</i>
Smelling	<i>[long line]</i>
...	<i>[short line]</i>
Smelling	<i>[long line]</i>
...	<i>[short line]</i>
Smelling	<i>[long line]</i>
Hearing	<i>[long line]</i>
...	<i>[short line]</i>
Hearing	<i>[long line]</i>
...	<i>[short line]</i>
Hearing	<i>[short line]</i>
...	<i>[long line]</i>
Hearing	<i>[long line]</i>
...	<i>[short line]</i>
Hearing	<i>[long line]</i>
...	<i>[short line]</i>
Seeing	<i>[long line]</i>
Seeing	<i>[long line]</i>
...	<i>[short line]</i>
Seeing	<i>[long line]</i>
...	<i>[short line]</i>
Seeing	<i>[long line]</i>
...	<i>[short line]</i>
Seeing	<i>[long line]</i>
...	<i>[short line]</i>
Seeing	<i>[long line]</i>
....	<i>[long line]</i>
Seeing	<i>[long line]</i>
...	<i>[short line]</i>
Seeing	<i>[long line]</i>

# Different Writers Different Times

## Variations

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- If you have world enough and time, you could work outwards from these poems to look at other poems or writings related to the experience of migration. This could form part of a cross subject boundary special focus session.
- You could work outwards to explore other poems by Irish and/or Caribbean poets, developing a broader sense of cultural and historical contexts.
- Gifted and talented students could be encouraged to find out more about the literary contexts and traditions in which these two poets were writing, including more about the way that free verse changed the landscape of modern poetry.
- Producing a collage interpretation of the poems might give some students a happier entry point into the stylistic analysis, working from a more intuitive and artistic grasp of the style.
- Another pairing identified using the Poetry Archive's Historical Recordings search and the "Where Next?" links: *I, Too* by Langston Hughes and *In-a Brixtan Markit* by James Berry

## Other resources

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- CD ROM available from the Poetry Archive of other recordings of James Berry reading his poems for children
- Video interview with James Berry on the Poetry Archive website