Dedication

To my 5th form English B students at Ottos Comprehensive School who made me so proud:

Alicia Charles
Cazzan Christian
Kamesa ElCock
Jahisha George
Patricia Hall
Huldah Kirby
Kyiesha Nedd
Erika Nicholas
Rohana Smith
Shalniel Stephens
Diana Tuitt
Kurné Williams
Sheneiza Winclass
Deidragay Young
Contents

Preface vi
Note to Students vii

Unit 1 Understanding Poetry 1
   How to Understand Poetry Part I 1
   How to Understand Poetry Part II 4
   How to Understand Poetry Part III 7
   How to Understand Poetry Part IV 9

Unit 2 The Language Used in Poetry 11
   Understanding Imagery Part I 11
   Understanding Imagery Part II 14
   The Poet’s Use of Language Part I 16
   The Poet’s Use of Language Part II 18
   The Poet’s Use of Language Part III 21
   The Poet’s Use of Language Part IV 23

CHECKPOINT 1 25

Poems Prescribed for the 2012–2014 CSEC® English B Examination 27

Poems Prescribed for the 2015–2017 CSEC® English B Examination 28

Unit 3 Analysis of Poems 29
   A Contemplation Upon Flowers 29
   Once Upon a Time 33
   God’s Grandeur 38
   Dreaming Black Boy 42
   Epitaph 47
   This is the dark time, my love 50
   ‘Le loupgarou’ 53

CHECKPOINT 2 56

To an Athlete Dying Young 57
Dulce et Decorum Est 62
Theme for English B 66
Forgive My Guilt 71
**Contents**

- Sonnet Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802
- **CHECKPOINT 3**
  - Because I Could Not Stop for Death
  - The Woman Speaks to the Man who has Employed her Son
  - Orchids
  - West Indies, U.S.A.
  - It is the Constant Image of your Face
  - A Stone’s Throw
  - Test Match Sabina Park
  - Ol’ Higue
  - South
  - A Lesson for this Sunday
  - Death Came to See Me in Hot Pink Pants
- **CHECKPOINT 4**

**Unit 4 Exam Preparation and Practice**
- Poems Grouped Together According to Similar Themes
- Suggested Writing Activities
- General Tips about Essay Writing
- Tips on Writing the Comparative Essay
- Sample Questions and Essays
- Examination Tips for Paper 2, Section B
- Possible Exam Questions
- Examination Tips for Paper 1, Section B
- Practice Questions

Biographical Notes
Classes of Poetry
Glossary of Literary Terms
Appendix
Bibliography
I wrote the first edition of *Poetry for the CSEC® English B Examination* in response to students’ complaints about how difficult it is for them to understand, appreciate and respond to poetry, especially that from the Caribbean Examination Certificate (CXC) list of poems. This edition has been significantly revised and updated to meet the demands of the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate English (CSEC®) Syllabus. Its objective is to provide all the information students need to obtain the highest level of achievement in the poetry section of Paper I and Paper 2 of the CSEC® English B examination.

Additional sections of this edition include:

- A section on understanding figurative language;
- A section on the poet’s use of language;
- Extension activities and useful sources of information for each poem;
- Tips for writing comparative essays;
- Two sample questions and two sample essays, providing a model for students’ own writing;
- Exam tips for answering questions on Paper I, Section B of the exam;
- Biographical notes on each poet;
- An expanded glossary of specialist literary terms.

I would be happy to receive feedback from both teachers and students. You may send your e-mail to poetry_studyguide@hotmail.com. Alternatively, you may mail your feedback to poetrystudyguide@live.com.
Note to Students

This is a study companion for you as you prepare for the CSEC® English B examination. By reviewing the material presented here you will be able to strengthen your critical thinking skills as well as deepen your understanding of how to study poems.

The analysis of the poems is not meant to be committed to memory. Although this study guide should be used to increase your understanding of each poem, it is not intended to substitute for the textbooks that you use in the classroom. It is meant to supplement them. You are still required to read each poem on your own and participate in all class discussions and activities.

If you come across terms you do not understand while reading this study guide, check the glossary to find out what they mean.

Poetry … Sweet Poetry

Fuels our innate love for rhythm, and rhyme
Expresses our thoughts, feelings, opinions
Stimulates our imagination
Provides a channel for our creativeness
Reveals the grandeur and eloquence of words
Can be adapted for the stage
Facilitates our understanding of our culture and that of others
Develops critical thinking
Poetry … sweet poetry

Sharon R. Wilson-Strann
How to Understand Poetry Part I

**Targets**

➾ Understanding the content or subject matter of the poem
➾ Identifying and describing characters
➾ Describing the setting
➾ Writing a summary and descriptive paragraphs

**Mastering the Content of the Poem**

The first step in studying a poem is to gain an overall idea of what it is about through a rapid reading. Avoid looking at the dictionary or study notes at this first reading since you should be able to understand enough of the poem to get a general idea. Then the poem should be read several times more slowly and carefully. Underline words and phrases you think may be especially important. Make comments in the margins. Look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary. Master the content of the poem before you venture to study parts of it or its specific features.

**Activity 1**

Read ‘A Contemplation Upon Flowers’ by Henry King (p. 29) a few times. Write a summary of what the poem is about.

**Identifying and Describing the Characters**

The characters in a poem may be *stationary* or *developing*. If the characters are stationary, they may experience changes in their circumstances, but their disposition remains unchanged. If the characters are developing, the circumstances they endure transform their disposition, so that they become, for example, more charitable or more sober than at the beginning of the poem. Ask yourself:

- Are there many characters?
- Are they realistic?
- Who is the main character?
- Who is the speaker/persona?
■ Is the speaker/persona present in the poem?
■ Is there a hero/heroine? What are his/her main characteristics?
■ Are there mystical characters? Does the poet use them effectively?
■ What lessons have I learned from the persona or the main character?

Activity 2
Read ‘Ol’ Higue’ by Mark McWatt (p. 106). Write a descriptive paragraph on the main character of the poem.

Recognising the Setting
There are various elements of the setting, which may be evident in any literary piece. These include:
■ time (clock, calendar, seasonal and/or historical time);
■ place (geographical location);
■ weather conditions (sundrenched, showery, stormy etc);
■ social and cultural conditions (clothing, language, beliefs, mannerisms, food, religious practices etc);
■ atmosphere (the feeling that is created within the poem, for example, pleasant, terrifying, apprehensive).

Something to Think About . . .
. . . In ‘Epitaph’ by Dennis Scott (p. 47), you will notice that there are both explicit and implicit details about the setting. You learn that a man was hanged one ‘clement morning’ (an explicit reference to time and weather conditions). The phrases ‘cane kept growing’ and ‘a dead slave or two’ (implicit and explicit references) identify the historical period. The phrase ‘our island tale’ suggests that the poem could have been set in any one of the West Indian islands where the cruel system of plantation slavery once existed. The ‘women’s / breathing’ and the children’s ‘hushed … hopscotch joy’ implies that there was sorrow, fear and even shock … an emotionally charged atmosphere.
Activity 3
Read the poem ‘Sonnet Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802’ by William Wordsworth (p. 74) and write a description of the setting. You may have to research the historical period to which Wordsworth refers. Ask your history teacher for assistance.