John Keats, Selected poems: (a) Odes

Lesson focus: To look at similarities and differences in the language, tone and structure of Keats’ odes.

Opening exercise: Remind the class of what an ode is and the associations with this form.

Students create a glossary of terms including:
- The Romantic ode
- Lyrical
- Iambic pentameter
- Celebratory
- Ceremonious
- Apostrophe
- Elevated style

Why do you think Keats chose to use this poetic form so often?

From memory name the six 'great odes' that Keats wrote.

Textual examination: Re-read Ode to Autumn and recap its meaning.

Annotate all the features of form and structure:
- Letter the rhyme scheme
- Scan the lines for length and rhythm
- Count the stanza lines

Highlight the distinctive diction and imagery in each stanza. See if you can identify any of the following:
- Alliteration
- Assonance and sibilance
- Onomatopoeia
- Hyperbole
- Simile
- Personification

Analyse the impact of the three questions in this poem

How does the mood and tone of the poem change throughout the three stanzas?

Discussion ideas: Allocate the other five great odes to pairs/groups:
- Ode on A Grecian Urn
- Ode to a Nightingale
- Ode on Indolence
- Ode to Psyche
- Ode to Melancholy

and use the following questions as prompts for discussion:
- What are the qualities of this poem that make it an ode?
- What does Keats use as his main subject matter in this ode?
- Identify the poetic techniques Keats uses and their impact
- What appear to be Keats personal feelings in this ode?
- How does Keats communicate these feelings?

Recreative task: Compose an ‘Ode to Keats’ employing as many of the following as possible:
- References to Greek mythology
- References to nature
- Personification
- Use of the imperative
- Words with negative connotations.

Critical task: Plan an essay addressing the following:
- How do Keats’ odes reflect the world of nature?

Extension task: Go through each of the odes and find:
- A description of a place or object
- Identify
  - Keats’ contemplation arising from the place or object described
  - His personal or spiritual insight arising out of this contemplation.