Teaching notes:

This activity helps students to establish a clear point of connection (similarity) between poems. It works best as a starter, plenary or for revision.

The game works like three-sided dominoes, but there’s no perfect fit between them all, and the tangle that ensues is still ok (assuming that the points of connection are valid). It might be best to set your students a time-limit before comparing their results.

Students work in pairs to play the game:

1. Deal out all the cards. They may look at the cards, but not show each other their hand.
2. Student A puts down any card, face up.
3. Student B looks at his/her hand and decides which card to play next to the first card. There must be a link by either theme, content (‘story’) or structure. The card is laid next to student A’s card (e.g. ‘structure’ next to ‘structure’), blocking that connection for the next card played. The cards should not tessellate, but branch out, as seen in the example.
4. Student A then lays down another card, to link to B’s card and so on.

More able students could then make their own cards (see template on last page) to add to the pack.

As a follow up, once the cards have been laid out, you could choose a poem and the pairs could share their point of comparison with another poem. The comparison could be done orally, as a plan, on sugar paper for display or as an essay. Once students are comparing poems at this level of detail, you could ask them to make points of comparison between the language of the poems, possibly using the quotations as a starting point.

Another way to follow up is to draw up a list of paired poems which share some interesting points of comparison.
Quotations:

‘Climbing My Grandfather’ by Waterhouse
“... On his arm I discover / the glassy ridge of a scar, place my feet / gently in the old stitches and move on”

‘Singh Song!’ by Nagra
“up di stairs is my newly bride / vee share in chapatti / vee share in di chutney / after vee hav made luv”

‘Winter Swans’ by Sheers
“as we skirted the lake, silent and apart, / until the swans came and stopped us / with a show of tipping in unison.”

‘Before You Were Mine’ by Duffy
“I’m not here yet. The thought of me doesn’t occur / in the ballroom with the thousand eyes, the fizzy, movie tomorrows”

‘Mother, any distance’ by Armitage
“I reach / towards a hatch that opens on an endless sky / to fall or fly.”

‘Follower’ by Heaney
“I stumbled in his hob-nailed wake, / Fell sometimes on the polished sod; / Sometimes he rode me on his back”

‘Eden Rock’ by Causley
“They beckon to me from the other bank. / I hear them call, ‘See where the stream-path is!’ / Crossing is not as hard as you might think.’”

‘Walking Away’ by Lewis
“That hesitant figure, eddying away / Like a winged seed loosened from its parent stem, / Has something I never quite grasp to convey”

‘The Farmer’s Bride’ by Mew
“When us was wed she turned afraid / Of love and me and all things human; / Like the shut of a winter’s day”

‘I Will Not Let Thee Go’ by Bridges
“I will not let thee go. / Ends all our month-long love in this? / Can it be summed up so,”

‘Neutral Tones’ by Hardy
“Since then, keen lessons that love deceives, / And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me / Your face”

‘Sonnet XXIX – I Think of Thee’ by EB Browning
“in this deep joy to see and hear thee / And breathe within thy shadow a new air / I do not think of thee – I am too near thee.”

‘Porphyria’s Lover’ by R Browning
“Be sure I looked up at her eyes / Happy and proud; at last I knew / Porphyria worshipped me;”

‘Love’s Philosophy’ by Shelley
“All things by a law divine / In one spirit meet and mingle. / Why not I with thine? —”

‘When We Two Parted’ by Byron
“Pale grew thy cheek and cold, / Colder thy kiss; / Truly that hour foretold / Sorrow to this.”
Poetry comparison ‘dominoes’

'Climbing My Grandfather' by Waterhouse

- child-grandparent love
- joy of love, love and social pressure

'Singh Song!' by Nagra

- newly-wed love and the daily routine, challenges stereotypes of Indian culture

'Winter Swans' by Sheers

- love, rejection
- love, rejection
- irregular (6x3 line stanzas and a couplet, natural speech rhythm, enjambment, irregular rhyme scheme)

'Before You Were Mine' by Duffy

- child-parent love, growing up, cost of parenting

'Mother, any distance' by Armitage

- child-parent love, ageing, dependence

'Follower' by Heaney

- speaker describes following
- speaker describes leaving home for the first time

- irregular (6x1 line stanzas, abcd
Poetry comparison ‘dominoes’

‘Eden Rock’ by Causley
child-parent love, ageing, death, innocence v’s experience

‘Walking Away’ by Lewis
reminiscence of speaker’s child’s first day at school

‘The Farmer’s Bride’ by Mew
irregular (2 parts, natural speech rhythm, ababcdcd rhyme scheme)

‘I Will Not Let Thee Go’ by Bridges
love, break-up

‘Neutral Tones’ by Hardy
bitter speaker addresses beloved after years apart

‘Sonnet XXIX - I Think of Thee’ by EB Browning
regular (Petrarchan sonnet, abbaabbaaccddc rhyme scheme)

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Poetry comparison ‘dominoes’

‘Porphyria’s Lover’ by R Browning
Frustrated speaker murders his lover

‘Love’s Philosophy’ by Shelley

‘When We Two Parted’ by Byron

love and social pressure

regular (2x8 line stanzas, 2 sentences, ababcdcd rhyme scheme)

regular (2x8 line stanzas, 2 sentences, ababcddcd rhyme scheme)

bitter speaker addresses beloved after years apart

Themed}

Story

Structure

Theme

Story

Structure

Theme

Story

Structure

Theme

Story

Structure

Themed