

Poetry Analysis and Explication

To appreciate the sounds and meaning of a poem, it is best to start by reading it aloud.

Once you've listened to the poem, pay attention to the words that make up the poem. *Where* a poem takes the reader is inseparable from *how* it takes the reader. Poets pay close attention to **diction** or word choice (words have connotative (associative) and denotative (dictionary) meanings); every word in a poem counts.

Figurative language, or devices of language--i.e. imagery, metaphor, simile, personification, allusion, and symbol--allow us to speak non-literally in order to achieve a special effect. Figurative language makes a comparison between the thing being written about and something else that allows the reader to better picture or understand it.

The music of poetry, or the sound patterns found in poetry, is created by various uses of language, such as alphabetical letter sounds; rhyme; alliteration; assonance; onomatopoeia; rhythm created by stressed and unstressed syllables (often most easily recognized in the poet's use of metrical feet); variations of line; tone; etc.

Go to the class website and choose a poem from the list (under honors requirement tab). **Make sure you include a copy of the poem showing your annotations.** Type your analysis and explication using MLA format.

Title of the poem: _____

Poet: _____

1. Summarize or paraphrase the poem. React personally: How does it make you feel? Does it remind you of a personal experience? A story you've heard? An issue? A situation?

2. Analyze the poem using your annotations and the following:

Voice

- Who is speaking?
- How would you characterize the speaker?
- To whom is he or she speaking?
- What is the speaker's tone?
- Why is he or she speaking?

Word Choice, Word Order

- What type of diction (word choice) is the poet employing? (look up some words to describe diction)
- How does the poet's word choice affect the meaning of the poem? The tone?
- Does the word order impact the reading of or the meaning of the poem?

Imagery

- Did you note any descriptive passages? For each image, name the sense that is being appealed to.
- What is the dominant impression being created?
- What is the relationship of the descriptive images to the speaker's state of mind?
- How do images create sense of time of day? Season of year? Atmosphere? Mood?
- Do the images progress? (day to night, hot to cold, soft to loud, color to color, etc)

Sound

- Does the poem contain an obvious meter or rhythm?
- What sounds are emphasized in the poem?
- Is there any repetition or rhyme?
- Is there alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia?

Structure

- Would this be considered one of the forms we studied? (lyric, narrative, sonnet, other)
- Is there a pattern of end rhymes? A syllabic line count? A set metrical pattern? (read it aloud and listen for beats)
- How are the stanzas arranged? The lines?

Theme

- What seems to be the point of the poem?
- What ideas are being communicated by the speaker?
- How are the ideas being reinforced by the elements of the poem?

Other

- Does the poet employ the use of symbol, allegory, allusion?
- Does the poet employ figures of speech? (simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, understatement)

3. What was **your response** to the poem on the first reading? Did your response change after your close study of the poem?

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If you do not understand a term, concept, or idea, look it up. Do some research to help you formulate your thoughts. You have the entire internet at your disposal!