

WHAT DO I DO WITH A POEM?

To some, poetry can seem like a mysterious and esoteric art; however, like anything else, once you understand the component parts—once you know what to look for—you can find your starting point and make meaning of a poem.

TYPE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Check off the box when you've considered each topic in regard to your poem.
	What kind of poem are you looking at? Is it a ballad, epic, ode, elegy, epigram, limerick? Other?
SITUATION	Who is the speaker ? To whom is he/she speaking?
	What is the apparent setting in the poem?
	What appears to be the occasion for composing the poem? In other words, what is the purpose of the poem?
STRUCTURE	Outline/divide the poem into sections of meaning and label each section with a purposeful title/phrase. These may be obviously arranged, or they may be identifiable only through carefully reading the poem.
	Transition words/phrases —identify and mark them. Are there “signaling” words that indicate a change in meaning/situation?
	Contrasts/juxtapositions/tensions/oppositions. These often (but not always) indicate irony.
	Repetition. (Anaphora = repeated opening word/phrase at the beginning of lines)
	Parallelism: a structural arrangement of parts of a sentence, paragraph, stanza, or some other unit of composition by which one element of equal importance with another is similarly developed or phrased.
LANGUAGE & DICTION	Key Lines —does your poem seem to have any particularly meaningful lines? Most poems do. Point these out!
	What is the verse form ? Free verse—follows no rules; Prose poem—poem that reads like traditional prose, identified by formal observance of conventions (capitalization, sentence structure, punctuation); Blank verse; Rhymed? Metered?
	What is the key imagery ? What are the connotative words and phrases (denotation=technical definition of a word; connotation= an idea or feeling that a word invokes person in addition to its literal or primary meaning)? Sight, Sound, Touch, Taste, Hearing, Feeling. Does any sense/reference dominate? Note words/lines. Imagery is often tied in with figurative language.
	Other devices? Paradoxical images? Allusions? Symbolism? Hyperbole? Puns? Scour your poem for these! Figurative language/poetic devices? All the ones you've heard before (as well as those you maybe haven't): Personification; Metonymy (replacing a known thing with something closely associated with it, e.g. I knew him in the cradle; Synecdoche (a part used for a whole, e.g. The crown of Britain); Synesthesia (atypical association of sensory imagery, e.g. <i>The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake</i>) and others.
TONE	Identify Identify/create multiple tone words , typically adjectives. They can be words in the poem or words you create.
	Is the tone changing (dynamic) or consistent (static) ?
	Identify specific lines that create the tone.
THEME	Is the poem didactic (meant to teach a lesson or further a message) or pure poetry (meant to be poetry for poetry's sake, just for artistic pleasure)
	What is the SIGNIFICANCE OF TITLE ? (Explain this in a <u>statement</u> .) What is the GENERAL IDEA/IMPLIED THEME of the poem? (This is a <u>statement</u> that explains the meaning or purpose of the poem. Do not just summarize the contents of the poem.)