

Alliteration: The repetition of a beginning consonant sound, usually in a line or verse or in a sentence.

Apostrophe: a figure of speech in which words are addressed to a person or thing--absent or present--or to a personified idea, such as death, truth, or nature.

Assonance: the repetition of the same vowel sound accompanied by unlike consonant sounds.

Ballad: a narrative that sprang from unknown sources, was transmitted by word of mouth (often altered in process), and was designed to be sung. folk ballad: a ballad which originated with the "folk" or common people. It's authorship is unknown. literary ballad: a ballad composed by a known author who consciously imitated the stanza form, rhythm pattern, and rhyme scheme of the folk ballad. The story told may have originated with the "folk" and previously have been transmitted by word of mouth.

Blank verse: unrhymed verse that is generally written in iambic pentameter.

Caesura: the main pause within a line of verse to indicate both the rhythm and the sense.

Cliche: a word or phrase that has been used so many times that it has lost it's original impact and is now stereotyped and too familiar. Ex. red as a rose, tried and true, happy as a lamb.

Consonance: the close repetition of the same consonant sounds before and after different vowels; for example: splish-splash.

Couplet: two consecutive and rhyming lines of verse which are usually of equal length. Closed couplet: a couplet containing a complete thought. A closed couplet ends with a strong punctuation mark, usually a period. Open couplet: a couplet whose lines are iambic pentameter.

Dissonance: a combination of harsh and jarring sounds or rhythmical patterns.

Elegy: a poem of subjective or meditative nature, especially one of grief.

Epic: a long narrative poem that deals with persons of heroic proportions and with actions of great significance.

Euphemism: a mild, inoffensive word or expression used in place of one that is harsh or unpleasant. ex. to pass away is a euphemism for to die.

Figurative language: intentional departure from normal language to gain strength and freshness of expression, to create a picture quality and poetic effect. Some figures of speech are similes, metaphors, metonymies, personifications, and synecdoches.

Foot: a combination of accented and unaccented syllables which make of a metrical unit. A foot may incorporate syllables from different words, and the foot divisions may cut across words, thus: "The cur/tains drawn/ upon/unfriend/ly night." some of the most frequently used are

The amphibrach: one accented syllable flanked by two unaccented syllables. (conviction)

The anapest: two unaccented syllables followed by one accented syllable.(interrupt)

The dactyle: one accented syllable followed by two unaccented syllables (different)

The iamb: one unaccented syllable followed by one accented syllable(above)

The spondee: two accented syllables in succession (shoeshine)

The trochee: one accented syllable followed by one unaccented syllable (promise)

Free verse: verse which does not conform to any fixed pattern. Such poetic devices as rhyme and regular rhythm occur only incidentally.

Image: a general term for any representation of a particular thing. It may be part of a metaphor, a simile, or a straight-forward description. An image may also have symbolic meaning.

Legend: a story that has come down from the past and that may have some basis in history.

Lyric: any short poem that seems to be especially musical and expresses, in most instances, the poet's clearly revealed thoughts and feelings.

Metaphor: A figure of speech in which two things are compared without the use of like or as.

Meter: the pattern or rhythm determined by the accented and unaccented syllables in a line of poetry. Established by the repetition of a dominant foot; for example, iambic pentameter, a line of verse consisting of five iambs.

Metonymy: a figure of speech in which one word is used in place of another word that it suggests as the cause for the thing signified, the container for the thing contained, etc.; for example, John Milton used metonymy in the line "When I consider how my light is spent," where he substituted light for the related word vision.

Metrical line: a line of verse composed of one or more feet. The following names are used to identify the most common lines: (1) monometer: one foot/ (2) dimeter: two feet (3) trimeter: three feet/ (4) tetrameter: four feet/ (5) pentameter: five feet/ (6) hexameter: six feet/ (7) heptameter: seven feet/ (8) octameter: eight feet.

Mood: The frame of mind or state of feeling created by a piece of writing; for example, a sorrowful mood or a sentimental mood.

Musical device: A poetic device involving sound, such as alliteration, assonance, consonance, internal rhyme.

Narrative poem: A story told in verse form.

Octave: An eight-line poem or stanza, especially the first eight lines of a sonnet.

Ode: A lengthy dignified lyric poem expressing exalted or enthusiastic emotion, often about some person or occasion worthy of esteem.

Onomatopoeia: The use of a word, the sound of which suggests what the word means (splash, buzz, murmur). This device enables the writer to express sense through sound.

Parody: A humorous imitation or burlesque of a serious piece of literature or writing.

Pastoral: The portrayal of an idealized country life, usually involving the love affairs of elegant shepherds and shepherdesses.

Personification: A figure of speech in which places, things, animals or ideas are endowed with human qualities.

Pun: A play on words, either by using words that sound alike but have different meanings or by using a word with two different meanings, both of which apply.

Quatrain: A four-line stanza.

Refrain: Lines that are repeated at the end of different stanzas.

Rhyme: The identity of sounds in accented syllables and of all vowel and consonant sounds following (beautiful, dutiful). The term rhyme is ordinarily used in the sense of end rhyme, the identity of sounds occurring in words that are at the end of matching lines of poetry.

Rhyme scheme: the fixed pattern of rhymes used in a poem.

Rhythm: In poetry, the recurrence of accented and unaccented syllables in a regular, or nearly regular pattern.

Rhythm pattern: The basic movement of a line, stanza, or poem resulting from the choice and arrangement of the metric units (feet). The rhythm pattern of a line containing five iambic feet is iambic pentameter.

Scansion: The analysis of the metrical structure of poetry.

Sestet: A six-line poem or stanza; especially the last six lines of a sonnet.

Simile: A figure of speech in which a comparison is made between two objects essentially unlike but resembling each other in one or more respects. The comparison is indicated by like or as.

Sonnet: A poem consisting of fourteen lines, usually written in iambic pentameter and dealing with a single idea or emotion. Poets frequently vary the scheme of the sestet.

Italian or Petrarchan sonnet: A sonnet composed of an octave followed by a sestet. The rhyme scheme of an octave is abba abba; that of the sestet is cdc dcd.

Shakespearean sonnet: A sonnet composed of three quatrains and a couplet. The rhyme scheme is generally abab cdcd efef gg.

Stanza: A group of lines of verse treated as a unit and separated from other units by a space.

Symbol: An object that stands for, or represents, an idea, belief, superstition, social or political institution, etc. A pair of scales, for example, is often a symbol for justice.

Verse: Single line of poetry; or poetry in general, usually poetry that has rhythm and rhyme

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Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Whose woods these are I think I know.

His house is in the village though;

He will not see me stopping here

To watch his woods fill up with snow.

Tiger

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright

In the forests of the night,

What immortal hand or eye

Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

How The Grinch Stole Christmas

The Grinch *hated* Christmas! The whole Christmas season!

Now please don't ask why. No one quite knows the reason.

It *could* be his head wasn't screwed on just right.

It *could* be, perhaps, that his shoes were too tight.

But I think that the most likely reason of all

May have been that his heart was two sizes too small.

Elegy

Pallidly sleeping, the Ocean's mysterious daughter

Lies in the lee of the boulder that shattered her charms.

Dawn rushes over the level horizon of water

And touches to flickering crimson her face and her arms,

While every scale in that marvelous rail

Quivers with color like on a Mediterranean sail.

Poetry Terms

speaker - the person (animal, place, or thing) or voice that is saying the poem

tone - the author's attitude toward the subject

imagery - words that bring to mind visual, auditory, tactile, or other sensory thoughts, feelings, and memories

figurative language - words and images that communicate extra connotations through the use of poetic devices. These poetic devices include simile, metaphor, personification, symbolism, hyperbole, and onomatopoeia.

simile - a comparison using "like" or "as": love is like a rose

metaphor - a comparison that says one thing is another thing: love is a rose

personification - gives human qualities to non-human things; Carla has a friendly car.

hyperbole - exaggeration

onomatopoeia - words that imitate sounds, like "buzz" and "click"

symbol - an image that carries extra meaning beyond itself. For example, the Bald Eagle symbolizes America's strength and independence.

musical devices - techniques that mold words in ways that imitate the qualities of musical instruments: rhyme, rhyme scheme, meter, alliteration, assonance, and consonance

rhyme - the repetition of syllable sounds at the ends of words

rhyme scheme - the pattern of end rhyme in a poem (end rhymes are the words that rhyme at the ends of lines), marked with letters, beginning with "a" and continuing through the alphabet

couplet - two consecutive lines of poetry that rhyme. For example,
"...something is amiss or out of place
when mice with wings can wear a human face."

meter - the measure of repeated regular units within a line or lines of poetry. Each unit is known as a foot, with each foot having one accented and one or two unaccented syllables.

alliteration - the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginnings of words. For example, in the phrase, "Sally sells seashells by the seashore," the letter s is used as an alliterative device.

assonance - the repetition of vowel sounds within words. For example, "Tiny white sea lice."

consonance - the repetition of consonant sounds within and at the ends of words. For example,
"...he sweats from pores round as goblets full of swamps."

stanza - a group of related lines that form a section in a poem. Some have thought of a stanza of poetry as being like a "paragraph" of poetry.

theme - "the main idea" and more: a general or central observation about life that goes beyond the poem's story, and may be either explicit or implied.

narrative poetry - poetry that tells you a story.

POETRY MADE EASY

Because poetry is multi-dimensional language, it has at least four dimensions to cover: intelligence, the five senses, the emotions, and the imagination. Therefore, we must read poetry many times and in a variety of ways in order to understand and appreciate it.

- A. Reread the poem several times and color mark things which seem confusing or appealing. This might include images such as colors, sounds, or smells, patterns, key letters, repetitions, etc. Try to read the poem aloud at least once to hear the sounds of the words, shifts in pattern, voice, or tone.
- B. Note the title, poet, and date, if given. What do they tell you, if anything.
- C. Try to determine the general thrust of the poem--does it seem to reveal human nature, tell a story, recall an experience?

Any poem can be "decoded" by simply asking six questions. After the reader struggles with an answer to these questions, the poem will usually be successfully decoded.

- A. Who is the speaker?
 1. Who is speaking?
 2. Can be called persona, speaker, voice.
 3. What kind of person is the persona?
 4. How so you feel about the persona?
- B. What is happening in the poem?
 1. Paraphrase the poem.
 2. In what situation does the persona find himself?
 3. When and where does the poem take place?
- C. What is the poem's tone?
 1. What is the poet's attitude toward the poem?
 2. Is the poet formal, informal, objective, subjective, colloquial, sincere, humorous, ironic, restrained, satiric, sad, bitter, reflective, solemn, playful, serious (ad nauseam).
 3. If the persona is speaking to someone, analyze their relationship.
- D. What is the poem's central purpose (theme)?
 1. Does it tell a story (narrative)?
 2. Does it reveal character or human nature (dramatic)?
 3. Does it call forth a memory, mood, or emotion (lyric)?
 4. Does it recall an experience or sensory event?
 5. Does it convey an intellectual idea or philosophy?
- E. How is the central purpose achieved? (this really means, what language resources/poetic devices does the poet employ to achieve his theme)
 1. Diction
 - a. Pay attention to denotation and connotation
 - b. What stands out about the position of the words, repetitions, allusions, ect.
 2. Sense Devices or Imagery
 - a. This is achieved through figures of speech, symbols, and allusions.
 - b. Represents the five senses through language--either external such as wetness or coldness, or internal, such as hunger and thirst.
 3. Sound devices
 - a. How are alliteration, assonance, consonance used?
 - b. Is there any regular or irregular rhyme? What is the rhyme scheme?
 - c. Is there any regular or irregular rhythm? What is the metric pattern?
- F. How does the poem work as poetry? (this is the most important of the six questions in the relation to writing and commentary)
 1. How is the poet's message conveyed by his language (i.e. is the message stark and the language taut?)
 2. How do the language resources contribute to the central purpose specifically? (just finding rhyme schemes, rhythm patterns, imagery, allusion, diction choices, ect. is not enough! If you cannot trace a relationship between the language device and the central purpose, why mention the poetic device?)

A Way In: Color-Marking Prose and Poetry Passages

Definitions of terms used in instructions:

image: a word (or more than one word) appealing to at least one of our senses; an image deals, then, with reader response. Of our five senses (visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, and gustatory), the visual is the strongest.

image pattern: the repetition of images, not necessarily in interrupted succession. This pattern may be the key to a deeper meaning.

motif: a repeated pattern of any type within a work. Note that an image pattern is a motif, but a motif is not always an image pattern.

Instructions:

After reading a passage of prose or poetry, begin looking at the piece as if through a microscope in order to better understand the writer's techniques. You should begin color-marking the passage using the instructions below.

1. 1. Begin by selecting an image you see as dominant in the passage, such as color, nature, or love. Using a different color for each category, underline each type of image, image pattern, and/or motif predominant in the passage. Carefully examine what is occurring within, prior to, and following the passage. Can these images be broken down into sub-categories? For example, are the images you underlined related to color light or dark? What does that suggest? Make sure you create a key that defines the color used when marking the passage. Some images may be underlined in more than one color.
2. 2. Based on your color-marking, ask these questions:
 - a. a. Is one color predominant? Why?
 - b. b. Is there some logical progression of imagery/motifs, from one type to another? Is the progression illogical? Why?
 - c. c. How do the images/motifs reinforce and/or illustrate the content of the passage? Or if you prefer, what is the relationship of the scene to the imagery/motifs used to describe it? Imagery reinforces content by giving it emphasis, by making it fresh (an unusual or creative use of imagery), and/or by adding irony (imagery that appears to contradict the content or describes the image in terms of its opposite qualities).
 - d. d. Is a specific tone or mood created by marked material?
3. 3. Based on your answers to the above questions and any others you think are appropriate, what inferences do you draw about the use of that particular image, imagery pattern, and/or motif? What do you think the poem is about? Use your markings to support your ideas.
4. 4. You may also use color-marking to note both the appealing and confusing aspects of the passage. If marking a poem, reread it aloud, then reread it again and again! Because poetry is multi-dimensional language, we deal with different layers: intelligence, senses, emotions, and imagination. There will be conflicting images.

5. 5. Your color-markings will help you to analyze and discover diction (denotation and connotation), repetition, allusion, syntax, symbols, images, metaphor, simile, alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyme scheme, metrical pattern, hyperbole, irony, paradox, and structures, both internal and external. Please note that not all of these conventions will be used. Further, markings should characterize tone. Think about the speaker's or persona's attitude toward the poem or passage's subject. Is it different from the author's attitude on the same subject? If so, in what ways? Tones range from formal to informal, from objective to subjective, from sincere to ironic, from restrained to playful, from humorous to sad, from reflective to reactionary, etc.
6. 6. Based on your color-marking, determine the poem or passage's central purpose/s. Is it to reveal an aspect of human nature? Or to call forth a memory, mood, or emotion? Or to convey an idea or philosophy? Or? Can you relate the passage's theme/s to other works you have read or personal experiences?
7. 7. Based on your color-marking, how is the central purpose/s achieved? In other words, what language resources/devices does the author employ to create the central purpose? How do those literary devices work to reveal, and then underscore, the central purpose/s? When writing, you may want to select one purpose to discuss in detail rather than trying to cover all aspects of the passage.

Note: Your responses to #6 and #7 help form the basis of a commentary on a poem or passage.

Poetry – How to Read and Analyze a Poem

I. How to Read a Poem

1. Read a poem more than once
2. Keep a dictionary by you and use it. A book on mythology and the Bible are also good reference books to keep close by when studying poetry.
3. Read to hear the sounds in your mind. Poetry is meant to be heard. Every word is important.
4. Always pay careful attention to what the poem is saying. Several readings may be necessary to fully understand the poem. On the first reading determine the subjects of the verbs, the antecedents of the pronouns, and other normal grammatical facts.
5. Practice reading the poem aloud – read slowly enough that each word is clear and distinct; pay attention to the punctuation and give all grammatical pauses their full due; do not treat each line as if it is a complete thought – unless there is end punctuation; read so that the rhythmical pattern is felt but not exaggerated.

II. Understanding a Poem

1. At the simplest level – **paraphrase** a poem – restate it making sure to include all of the ideas in the poem and make the central idea or **theme** more accessible
2. Ask *Who is the speaker? What is the occasion?*
3. Ask *What is the central purpose of the poem?*
4. Ask *By what means is the central purpose achieved?* Use the questions on *A General Guide for Poetry Analysis and Evaluation*

III. Word Choice

1. **Denotation** – dictionary meaning of a word
2. **Connotation** – overtones of meaning suggested by a word.

For example **doubloon**, which is a type of coin, suggests the idea of pirates to many readers even though the dictionary meaning says nothing about pirates. While words may have many different connotations, they may also have many different denotations. Be sure to consider all of the different denotations of a word as well.

IV. Imagery

The representation through language of sense experience. Images may be visual; auditory (sense of sound); olfactory (sense of smell); gustatory (sense of taste); tactile (sense of touch – hardness, softness, wetness, heat, or cold); organic (internal sensation such as hunger, thirst, fatigue, or nausea); or kinesthetic (sense of movement or tension in the muscles or joints). Poets typically use **concrete images** instead of abstract images. For example “ruby-throated hummingbird” in place of “hummingbird”.

Examine **how** the images evoke vivid experience, convey emotion, or suggest ideas.