

Using TPCASTT to Analyze Poetry

T	Title	Before you even think about reading the poetry or trying to analyze it, speculate on what you think the poem <i>might</i> be about based upon the title. Often time authors conceal meaning in the title and give clues in the title. Jot down what you think the poem will be about.												
P	Paraphrase	Before you begin thinking about meaning or trying to analyze the poem, don't overlook the literal meaning of the poem. One of the biggest problems that students often make in poetry analysis is jumping to conclusions before understanding what is taking place in the poem. When you paraphrase a poem, write in your own words exactly what happens in the poem. Look at the number of sentences in the poem—your paraphrase should have exactly the same number. This technique is especially helpful for poems written in the 17 th and 19 th centuries. Make sure that you understand the difference between a <i>paraphrase</i> and a <i>summary</i> .												
C	Connotation	<p>For this approach the term refers to any and all poetic devices, focusing on how such devices contribute to the meaning, the effect, or both of a poem. You may consider imagery, figures of speech, diction, point of view, and sound devices. It is not necessary that you identify all the poetic devices within the poem. The ones you do identify should be seen as a way of supporting the conclusions you are going to draw about the poem. What meaning does the poem have beyond the literal meaning? Complete as many areas as possible in the chart below.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 5px;">Form - the way the poem is laid out on the page, its rhyme scheme, sonnet, terza rima, octave rima, villanelle</td> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 5px;">Diction - word choice; unusual words, connotation, denotation</td> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 5px;">Imagery - language that appeals to any of the five senses, when an author uses words to paint a picture)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 5px;">Point of View - from whose perspective is it told</td> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Details</td> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 5px;">Allusions (indirect references to history, current events, other literary works/media)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 5px;">Symbolism - when an author uses symbols: objects literally there in the poem/story, but which also have deeper symbolic meanings</td> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 5px;">Figurative Language- simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, exaggeration</td> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 5px;">Sound devices - alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, rhythm, rhyme, consonance</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3" style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Other Devices- irony, oxymoron, paradox, pun, sarcasm, understatement, antithesis</td> </tr> </table>	Form - the way the poem is laid out on the page, its rhyme scheme, sonnet, terza rima, octave rima, villanelle	Diction - word choice; unusual words, connotation, denotation	Imagery - language that appeals to any of the five senses, when an author uses words to paint a picture)	Point of View - from whose perspective is it told	Details	Allusions (indirect references to history, current events, other literary works/media)	Symbolism - when an author uses symbols: objects literally there in the poem/story, but which also have deeper symbolic meanings	Figurative Language- simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, exaggeration	Sound devices - alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, rhythm, rhyme, consonance	Other Devices- irony, oxymoron, paradox, pun, sarcasm, understatement, antithesis		
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A	Attitude	Having examined the poem's devices and clues closely, you are now ready to explore the multiple attitudes and tones that may be present. Examination of diction, images, and details suggests the speaker's attitude and contributes to understanding. You may refer to the list of words on <i>Tone</i> that will help you. Remember that usually the tone or attitude cannot be named with a single word. Think <i>complexity</i> . What is the speaker's attitude? How does the speaker feel about him or herself, about others, and about the subject? What is the author's attitude? How does the author feel about the speaker, about other characters, about the subject, and the reader? List specific words and phrases that help give clues to attitude.												

S	Shifts	<p>Where do the shifts in tone, setting, voice, etc. occur? Look for time and place, keywords, punctuation, stanza divisions, changes in length or rhyme, and sentence structure. What is the purpose of each shift? How do they contribute to effect and meaning? Rarely does a poem begin and end the poetic experience in the same place. As is true of most us, the poet's understanding of an experience is a gradual realization, and the poem is a reflection of that understanding or insight. Watch for the following keys to shifts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key words, (but, yet, however, although) • punctuation (dashes, periods, colons, ellipsis) • stanza divisions • changes in line or stanza length or both • irony • changes in sound that may indicate changes in meaning • changes in diction
T	Title	<p>Now look at the title again, but this time on an interpretive level. What new insight does the title provide in understanding the poem?</p>
T	Theme	<p>What is the poem saying about the human experience, motivation, or condition? What subject or subjects does the poem address? What do you learn about those subjects? What idea does the poet want you take away with you concerning these subjects? Remember that the theme of any work of literature is stated in <u>a complete sentence</u>.</p>