

7 Questions to Ask When Analyzing Poetry

- First look at the title if given.
 - Second, read the poem and notice the punctuation.
1. Who is speaking?
 2. To whom is the speaker speaking?
 3. What is the poet's tone? (Tone can change/shift. Also, see handout on tone.)
 4. What is the mood or atmosphere of the poem? (i.e., the way the poem makes the reader feel) Can you use the same adjective to describe both tone and mood?
Yes, but not always.
 5. What is the poet's theme? (the main idea or the message the poet is sending to the reader)
 6. Does the poem have a pattern? Not rhyme scheme. Pattern of thoughts (general to specific, external/internal, inside/outside, near/far, circular)
 7. What is the poet's style?
 - a. diction—choice of words
 - b. figures of speech/figurative language
 - i. simile
 - ii. metaphor
 - iii. personification
 - iv. hyperbole
 - v. apostrophe
 - c. concrete imagery—use of words that appeal to 1 or more of the 5 senses
 - d. allusions
 - i. classical—ancient Greek or Roman mythology
 - ii. biblical
 - iii. historical
 - iv. literary
 - e. symbols
 - i. nonce (private)—unique to the author
 - ii. conventional
 - f. sound imagery
 - i. alliteration
 - ii. onomatopoeia
 - iii. euphony (words or sounds that are pleasing to the ear)
 - iv. cacophony (words or sounds that are unpleasant)

- You have to read EVERY WORD of the poem. EVERY WORD COUNTS!
- Read them the following asking them to imagine each line. Stop after each line so they can think of the image. The last line is a shocker for them.
“Here a pretty baby lies,
Sung asleep with lullabies,
Pray, be still, and not stir
The easy earth that covers her.”