

The Twelve Steps of Expert Poetry Analysis

1. **Title.** Think about the title. Predict what the poem will be about even before you read it. Could the title have literal, metaphorical, symbolic, or ironic implications?
2. **Sound.** Read the poem aloud. Read it a second time. Is there a particular rhyme, repetition of words or sounds, or distinct rhythm?
3. **Synopsis.** Briefly summarize what is literally happening in the poem in just two to three sentences.
4. **Background/context.** Any unfamiliar words or references or allusions? Look them up and define or explain them here!
5. **Diction.** List keywords from each stanza that stand out. Try to identify the relationship between particularly important words (those that are repeated or used at the beginning or end of the stanza).
6. **Tone.** Based on the diction used, what is the tone of the poem? Is there any irony used? What is the mood?
7. **Questions.** What is confusing about the poem? What is unclear about the narrator, narrative, conflicts, and so on?
8. **Imagery.** What images are used? What effect or impact do they have? List them out in full, there is typically a lot!
9. **Shifts.** Identify contrasts, paradoxes, or juxtapositions. What effect or impact do they have?
10. **Figurative Language.** What figurative language is used? That can be metaphor, simile, personification, alliteration, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, etc. There may be a lot, so focus on the most important three or four.
11. **Theme.** We are getting closer now. What are some possible themes of the poem? What is the author trying to make us notice about ourselves, our environment, our values, our nature?
12. **Evaluation.** Do you think the poem is effective? Does the author succeed in presenting their work in a powerful way?

The Twelve Steps of Expert Song Analysis

1. **Title.** Could the title have literal, metaphorical, symbolic, or ironic implications?
Think about the title and try to predict what the song will be about even before you hear it.
2. **Sound.** Is there a particular rhyme, repetition of words or sounds, or distinct rhythm?
3. **Synopsis.** Briefly summarize what is literally happening in the song in just two to three sentences.
4. **Background/context.** Any unfamiliar words or references?
5. **Diction.** List keywords from each verse that stand out. Try to identify the relationship between particularly important words (those that are repeated in the chorus or are used at the beginning or end of the verse).
6. **Tone.** Based on the musicality and the diction used, what is the tone of the song? Is there any irony used? What is the mood?
7. **Questions.** What is confusing about the song? What is unclear about the narrator, narrative, conflicts, and so on?
8. **Imagery.** What images are used? What effect or impact do they have?
9. **Shifts.** Identify contrasts, paradoxes, or juxtapositions. What effect or impact do they have?
10. **Figurative Language.** What figurative language is used? It could be metaphor, simile, personification, alliteration, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, etc. There are usually quite a few!
11. **Theme.** What are some possible themes of the song? What is the artist trying to make us notice about ourselves, our environment, our values, our nature?
12. **Evaluation.** Do you think that the song is effective? Does the artist succeed in presenting their work in a powerful way?