

Poetry Analysis—TP-CASTT

T TITLE

Before you even think about reading the poetry or trying to analyze it, speculate on what you think the poem *might* 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 this 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 17th and 19th centuries. Sometimes your teacher may allow you to *summarize* what happens in the poem. Make sure that you understand the difference between a *paraphrase* and a *summary*.

C CONNOTATION

Although this term usually refers solely to the emotional overtones of word choice, 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 (simile, metaphor, personification, symbolism, etc), diction, point of view, and sound devices (alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhythm, and rhyme). 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.

A ATTITUDE

Having examined the poem's devices and clues closely, you are now ready to explore the multiple attitudes that may be present in the poem. Examination of diction, images, and details suggests the speaker's attitude and contributes to understanding. You may refer to the list of words on *Tone* that will help you. Remember that usually the tone or attitude cannot be named with a single word Think *complexity*.

S SHIFTS

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:

- 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 Now look at the title again, but this time on an interpretive level. What new insight

does the title provide in understanding the poem.

T THEME

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 a complete sentence.

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