

Poetry Analysis

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 English 110 AK

What Is Poetry?

FREEWRITE:

- When you think of the word “poetry,” what comes to mind?
- What should poems look like?
- What should poems be about?

What Is Poetry?

“Poetry Class”

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqICJlJyc_A

Marlon Esquerra, “Morning Papers”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAvWlQ9Xrzw>

What Is Poetry?

- Poetry is the most compressed form of literature.
- Poetry is composed of carefully chosen words expressing great depth of meaning.
- Poetry uses specific devices such as connotation, sound, and rhythm to express the appropriate combination of meaning and emotion.

Two Basic Types of Poetry

- **TRADITIONAL:** follows standard rules of grammar and syntax with a regular rhythm and rhyme scheme.
- **MODERN:** avoids rhyme and standard grammatical organization and seeks new ways of expression.

What Does Poetry Do?

- Poetry isn't just the emotional expression of the author...
- Entertains people
- Celebrates
- Helps people learn and remember things
- Sells things, ideas, or products
- Makes arguments
- Teaches values

How do you get to the “deep hidden meaning” in poetry?

- Some poems may be riddles, but that’s not the same as a deep hidden meaning.
- The “deep hidden meaning” people get from poems comes from literary analysis.

How do you get to the “deep hidden meaning” in poetry?

- Literary poetry is condensed.
- Ideally, a line of poetry says a lot more than the same amount of prose.
- But that doesn’t mean the poet hid the meaning in the poem.

“Terminal Hotel, San Francisco 1961”



Jaime Jacinto

*Heaven Is Just
Another Country*
(1996)

10 Steps to Reading A Poem

- Read through the poem to get a sense of it. Think about the title of the poem.
- Identify the sentences and independent clauses. Circle the periods, exclamation points, question marks, and semicolons.
- Note the rhyme scheme. Look for a pattern.

10 Steps to Reading A Poem

- Read the poem out loud. Try to follow the rhythm. If you do this you’ll hear where the poet plays with the rhythm. And you’ll hear the rhyme scheme.
- Underline interesting or unfamiliar words or phrases. Look up any words you don’t understand.

10 Steps to Reading A Poem

- Re-read the poem out loud.
- Mark off any sections in the poem. These sections may be speeches given by a character, discussions of a particular topic, changes in mood, or a new stage of an argument.

10 Steps to Reading A Poem

8. Re-read the poem.
9. Figure out the tone -- the *emotion* -- of the poem.
10. Re-read the poem.

Step #11: Write It Down!

- **PLOT:** A summary of the “plot” or events of the poem.
- **SUBJECT:** List of words or phrases the poem is about.
- **THEME:** The idea the poet or speaker is conveying about each subject. What is the speaker’s position? What is the poem’s “meaning”?

How Do You Analyze a Poem?

- A poem should be read several times in order to “hear” it and feel its emotions.
- The more times you read the poem, the more you can analyze and understand subtle shades of meaning in a poem.
- Arrive at an intelligent interpretation.
- Understand what you read.

Parts of a Poem

- | | |
|-------------|----------------------|
| 1. Speaker | 6. Diction & Syntax |
| 2. Audience | 7. Imagery |
| 3. Subject | 8. Figures of Speech |
| 4. Tone | 9. Sound |
| 5. Theme | 10. Rhythm |

(1) Speaker



- The created narrative voice of the poem (*i.e.* the person the reader is supposed to imagine is talking).
- The speaker is not necessarily the poet.
- The poet often invents a speaker for the poem in order to give him/herself more freedom to compose the poem.

Persona



- The poet can create another character to be the speaker, called the persona.
- A persona is a character created by the poet to narrate the poem.
- By creating a persona, the poet imagines what it is like to enter someone else’s personality.

Dramatic Monologue

- A poem in which the poet uses a persona, or a narrative voice other than his own, to tell the entire poem.
- These tend to sound like one-sided conversations, like the character is talking to him/herself.



(2) Audience

- The person or people to whom the speaker is speaking.
- Identifying the audience within a poem helps you to understand the poem better.



Types of Audience

- The speaker can address another character in the poem.
- The speaker can address a character who is not present or is dead, which is called apostrophe.
- The speaker can address you, the reader.

(3) Subject

- The general or specific topic of the poem.
- What the poem is about.



(4) Tone

- The poet's attitude toward the subject of the poem.
- This may be different from the speaker's attitude.



(5) Theme

- The statement the poem/poet makes about its subject.



(6) Diction & Syntax

- **DICTION:** The poet's choice of words.
- Meaning and sound contribute to the tone and feeling of the poem.
- **SYNTAX:** The organization of words, phrases and clauses, *i.e.* the word order.



Denotation & Connotation

- **DENOTATION:** definition according to the dictionary.
- **CONNOTATION:** the emotions, thoughts and ideas associated with and evoked by the word.



(7) Imagery

- Words and phrases used specifically to help the reader to imagine each of the senses: smell, touch, sight, hearing, and taste.



Types of Imagery

- olfactory imagery stimulates the sense of smell.
- tactile imagery stimulates the sense of touch.
- visual imagery stimulates the sense of sight.
- auditory imagery stimulates the sense of hearing.

Types of Imagery

- gustatory imagery stimulates the sense of taste.
- kinesthesia is imagery that recreates a feeling of physical action or natural bodily function (like a pulse, a heartbeat, or breathing).
- synaesthesia is imagery that involves the use of one sense to evoke another (loud color; warm gesture).

(8) Figures of Speech

- Poetic devices in which two images or objects are compared to make language interesting and meaningful.



(8) Figures of Speech

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Simile | 8. Symbolism |
| 2. Metaphor | 9. Verbal Irony |
| 3. Personification | 10. Overstatement |
| 4. Anthropomorphism | 11. Understatement |
| 5. Synecdoche | 12. Paradox |
| 6. Metonymy | 13. Oxymoron |
| 7. Allusion | |

Simile

- A comparison that uses the words “like” or “as,” or a verb like seems or appears to draw two objects or images into a relationship.

“Harlem” (Langston Hughes)

What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore --
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over --
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

Metaphor

- Functions the same way simile does, except that the comparison is more implied and the words “like” or “as” are omitted.
- The verb “to be” is used.

Your cheeks are red cherries.

Personification

- A type of metaphor that gives living qualities to inanimate objects or abstract ideas; or human qualities (feelings, thoughts) to animals.
- It gives non-living things and animals the ability to think, feel emotions, or have human relationships.

“The Wind” (James Stephens)

The wind stood up, and gave a shout;
He whistled on his fingers, and

Kicked the withered leaves about,
And thumped the branches with his hand,

And said he'd kill, and kill, and kill;
And so he will! And so he will!

Anthropomorphism

- A kind of personification that gives human attributes to something not human, such as parts of nature, abstract ideas, or, in particular, deities.

from "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" (Emily Dickinson)

"Because I could not stop for Death --
He kindly stopped for me --
The Carriage held but just Ourselves --
And Immortality."

Synecdoche

- A form of metaphor where one part stands for the whole, or the whole is substituted for one part. In other words, we speak of something by naming only a part of it.

"Robby got wheels this summer."

wheels = car

"All hands were on deck."

hands = sailors

Metonymy

- A play on words based on association. With metonymy, an object is referred to in terms of something closely related to it, yet not actually a part of it (*i.e.* not synecdoche).
- In other words, we comment on something by naming a separate object, but one that is closely associated with the original subject.

Metonymy

Queen Elizabeth controlled the crown for years.

the crown = the monarchy

He has always loved the stage.

The stage = the theater

Allusion

- A reference made to another literary work, historical event, work of art, or a famous person's quote that adds more depth to the poet's/author's meaning.
- In fact, all poems retelling old stories are allusive.

“To An Artist, To Take Heart” (Louise Bogan)

“Slipping in blood, by his own hand,
through pride,
Hamlet, Othello, Coriolanus fall.
Upon his bed, however, Shakespeare died,
Having outlived them all.”

Symbolism

- When an author uses an object or idea to suggest more than its literal meaning.
- A person, place, or event stands for something other than it is, usually something broader or deeper than it is.

Symbolism

- The author intentionally uses symbolism in his/her writing.
- The author selects specific objects, places or things to function as symbols in his/her work in order to expand and deepen the meaning of the piece.
- The author trusts that the reader will be skilled enough to notice the symbolism.

Verbal Irony

- One meaning is stated, but another, antithetical (opposite and opposed) meaning is intended.
- This subtle irony is dependent on the author’s word choice.

from “Of Alphus” (Anonymous, 16th Century)

No egg on Friday Alph will eat,
But drunken will he be
On Friday still. Oh, what a pure
Religious man is he!

Overstatement (Hyperbole)

- An exaggeration; giving something more or less of a quality than it really has.
- This term is usually used as a put down, or to discredit what someone is saying.

*After so many years, he can still feel
the sting of his mother’s slap.*

Understatement (Litotes/Meiosis)

- Saying something with an overly light tone; the speaker's words convey less emotion than he actually feels.

"I'm really glad that you have come to visit," said the spider to the fly.

Paradox

- A statement that appears to be absurd, untrue, or contradictory, but may actually be true.

*from "Death, Be Not Proud, Though
Some Have Called Thee"*

(John Donne)

"One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; death, thou
shalt die."

Oxymoron

- A form of paradox where two contradictory terms are combined in one phrase.

*cold fire
honest thief
darkly lit
fearful joy*

(9) Sound

- The use of specific vowels, consonants, accents and the combination of these three.
- Sound devices influence the reader/listener's perception of the poem both intellectually and emotionally.



Types of Sound Devices

- **ALLITERATION:** the repetition of the same consonant sounds at the beginnings of words that are near each other in a poem.
- **RHYME:** the effect caused by matching vowel and consonant sounds at the end of words.

(10) Rhythm

- The repetition of stress within a poem.
- It is the entire movement or flow of the poem as affected by rhyme, stress, diction, and organization.



Meter

- Organization of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of poetry.


I came, I saw, I conquered.

- The repeated pattern of unstressed to stressed syllables in the above line tends to move the reader forward, pushing him through the line in a rhythmic, methodic way.

Organization

- The structure of the poem; the way the verses (lines) are organized on the page.
- The organization can impact the poem's rhythm by affecting the flow of the verses.
- Different organizations of verses within a poem make up different length stanzas, or poetic units.

Stanzas

- Stanzas operate like paragraphs in a story.
- **COUPLETS:** (two lines) Usually, the two lines rhyme.
- **TERCETS:** (three lines) The three lines may or may not have the same end rhyme. If all three lines rhyme, the tercet is a triplet.
- **QUATRAINS:** (four lines) The quatrain is the most common form of stanzaic organization.

Verse

- Different combinations of meters, rhyme, and organization make up different kinds of verse.
- **BLANK VERSE:** verse that does not rhyme but follows a metric pattern.
- **FREE VERSE:** lines of poetry strong in rhythm but free of the regular repetitions of rhyme or meter. This kind of poetry is closer to natural speech.

References

"What is Poetry?"

Developed by Vivion Smith, adapted from work by Susan Giansanti, Jules Nelson Hill & Ellen Beck

<http://depts.gallaudet.edu/englishworks/literature/poetry.html>

"Critical Reading: A Guide"

Designed by Professor John Lye

<http://www.brocku.ca/english/jlye/criticalreading.html>

"How to Read Poetry When Your Teacher Assigns It for Homework"

Provided by Dr. Andrew Higgins

<http://garts.latech.edu/owl/literature/poetryguide.htm>

HOMEWORK

1. Read your assigned poem in the first section of *The Evolution of a Sigh*.
2. Journal Entry #5: Do a close reading and identify all 10 parts of the poem. Summarize the poem, then write your response to it.

The Evolution of a Sigh/Portrait #1

1. "The Evolution of a Sigh"
2. "Portrait #1"
3. "Surviving the Post American Tropics"
4. "Buñuel"
5. "Revolution of the Tenses"
6. "Ingmar Bergman: a Personal Essay"

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