

TP-CASTT Strategy for Poetry Analysis

Title Ponder the title before reading the poem.

Paraphrase Translate the poem into your own words.

What's the literal meaning?

Connotation Contemplate the poem for meaning beyond the literal.

While "connotations" are emotional overtones, here, it means that you should examine all poetic devices, focusing on how they contribute to meaning. Consider figurative language (especially simile, metaphor, and personification), symbolism, diction, point of view, and sound devices (alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhythm, and rhyme)

Attitude Observe both the speaker's and the poet's attitude.

This is tone. To find tone, after you've underlined words that suggest feelings or seem important, use DIDLS:

- Diction the connotation of the word choice
- Images vivid appeals to understanding through the senses
- Details facts that are included or those omitted
- Language the overall use of language (i.e. formal, clinical, jargon)
- Sentence Structure how structure affects the reader's attitude

Shifts Note shifts in speakers and in attitudes (tones).

This is about the poem's progression. Rarely does a poet begin and end in the same place. Watch for the following:

- Key words (i.e. but, however, yet, although)
- Punctuation (i.e. dashes, periods, colons, ellipses)
- Stanza divisions
- Changes in line or stanza length (or both)
- Irony (sometimes irony hides shifts)
- Effect of structure on meaning
- Changes in sound that may indicate changes in meaning
- Changes in diction (i.e. slang to formal language)

Title Examine the title again, this time on an interpretive level.

Now that you've read the poem, what can the title mean beyond a literal level?

Theme Determine what the poet is saying (meaning).

This is meaning. What human experience, motivation, or condition does the poem suggest? Stuck? Try this:

1. Summarize the plot of the poem in a paragraph.
2. List the subject(s) of the poem (moving from literal concepts to abstract ones like death, war, discovery)
3. Then determine what the poet is saying about each subject and write a complete sentence. That sentence is theme.