

TPCASTT Poem Analysis Method

Poems can be very difficult to interpret because much of what they have to say is not written but is implied. A major problem that students have with interpreting poetry is that they read the poem once, pick out a detail or two and then jump to a conclusion, often the wrong conclusion. To avoid this pitfall, it is important to gather significant data and try out different hypotheses before drawing a conclusive interpretation. These steps, similar to the scientific method, comprise a safe way to avoid serious misinterpretations.

Title

Ponder the title before reading the poem. Make up questions about the title. There are two kinds of titles: interactive titles and naming titles. Interactive titles have some sort of interplay with poem itself and can affect its meaning. Naming titles may give less crucial information. If a poem lacks a title, you can do this step with the first line of the poem or skip it.

Paraphrase

Translate the poem into your own words. And I mean translate! Word for word! Find synonyms for every possible word. Summarizing is NOT paraphrasing!

Connotation

Contemplate the poem for meaning beyond the literal. Identify and figure out the figurative language. Do DIDLS.

Attitude

After identifying a subject/topic of the poem, figure out how the speaker (and/or the poet) feels about it.

Shifts

Note transitions in the poem, shifts in subject, attitude, mood, or motif.

Title

Examine the title again, this time on an interpretive level. Answer your questions. Figure out how the title illuminates the poem. Remember a "naming title" may not mean much.

Theme

After identifying a subject or topic of the poem, determine what the poet *believes* about the subject. What is his or her opinion of the subject?