

TP-CASTT: A Method for Poetry Analysis

TITLE: Examine the title before reading the poem. Consider the various meanings (denotation/connotation) of this title.

PARAPHRASE: Translate the poem into your own words (literal/denotation). Resist the urge to jump to interpretation. A failure to understand what happens literally, inevitably leads to an interpretive misunderstanding.

*Look for: Syntactical units (complete sentences rather than line by line)
Enjambment vs. End-stopped lines*

CONNOTATION: Examine the poem for meaning beyond the literal. What does the poem *mean*?

Look for: Emotional overtones of Diction

Imagery

- *Metaphor*
- *Simile*
- *Personification*

Irony

- *Paradox*
- *Understatement*
- *Oxymoron*

Effect of sound devices

- *Alliteration*
- *Onomatopoeia*
- *Assonance*
- *Consonance*
- *Rhyme*
- *Rhythm*

Apostrophe

- *Synecdoche*
- *Metonymy*
- *Meiosis*
- *Personification*

ATTITUDE or TONE: Examine both the speaker's and the poet's attitudes.

Remember, don't confuse the author with the person that he or she creates in the poem.

Basic analysis of Tone: DIDLS or PDIDLS*

Look for: Speaker's attitude toward self, other characters, and the subject of the poem

Attitudes of characters other than the poem's speaker

Poet's attitude toward speaker, other characters, subject, and finally, toward the reader

SHIFTS: Note shifts in speaker, attitudes, rhetorical stance.

Look for: Occasion of poem (time and place)
Key words (e.g. but, yet, although, for)
Punctuation (dashes, periods, colons . . .)
Stanza divisions
Changes in line and/or stanza length
Irony (sometimes irony hides shifts)
Effect of structure on meaning

TITLE: Examine the title again, this time on an interpretative level.

THEME: First list what the poem is about (**subjects**); then determine what the poet is saying about each of those subjects (**theme**).
Remember, the theme must be expressed as a complete sentence.

Always show *how* poetic devices operate in conveying the effect and meaning of the passage or poem. In other words, you must always support your ASSERTIONS with specific detail, evidence and explanation!

***Basic Analysis of Tone: DIDLS or PDIDLS**

POINT OF VIEW	The narrative's perspective (<i>first, third person, limited or omniscient</i>).
DICTION	The connotation of the word choice.
IMAGES	Vivid appeals to understanding through the senses, use of figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification, symbolism, allusion, antithesis, apostrophe, synecdoche, metonymy, meiosis).
DETAILS	Facts included or omitted based on speaker's perspective.
LANGUAGE	The overall use of language such as formal, clinical, argon, emotional. These words describe force or quality of diction, images and details. They qualify how the work is written.
SENTENCE STRUCTURE	How structure affects the reader's attitude. Determine what the poet is saying.

Remember to always know the difference between the speakers and the poet's, and observe the attitude of both!

* Adapted using materials from both Peltier and Vermeer