

Mastering Literary Analysis in Poetry

UNDERSTANDING THE POEM

- Read the poem multiple times to grasp its overall meaning and tone.
- Identify the speaker and audience, as well as the context in which the poem was written.

EXAMPLE

In Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise," the speaker addresses an oppressive audience, conveying themes of resilience and empowerment.

EXPLORING THEMES AND MESSAGES

- Identify the central themes and messages the poet conveys.
- Consider how these themes relate to the human experience or societal issues.

EXAMPLE

In "Daisy Bell" by Percy Bysshe Shelley, themes of the impermanence of power and the inevitable decay of human achievements are explored.

SOUND DEVICES

- Pay attention to sound devices like alliteration, assonance, consonance, and onomatopoeia.
- Consider how these enhance the poem's mood and rhythm.

EXAMPLE

In "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe, the use of internal rhyme and alliteration creates a haunting and melodic quality.

CONTEXTUAL UNDERSTANDING

- Research the historical, cultural, and biographical context of the poem.
- Consider how these contexts influence the themes and perspectives presented in the poem.

EXAMPLE

In "The Soldier" by Rupert Brooke, the context of World War I and patriotic sentiment shapes the poem's themes of nationalism and sacrifice.

EXAMPLE

In "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" by Dylan Thomas, the villanelle form reinforces the poem's themes of resistance and defiance.

ANALYZING STRUCTURE AND FORM

- Examine the poem's structure: stanza arrangement, line length, and rhyme scheme.
- Consider how these elements contribute to the poem's meaning and emotional impact.

EXAMPLE

In "The Tyger" by William Blake, the use of vivid imagery and metaphors questions the nature of creation and the duality of existence.

LANGUAGE AND IMAGERY

- Analyze the poet's choice of words, including figurative language such as metaphors, similes, and personification.
- Explore how imagery creates vivid pictures or evokes emotions.

EXAMPLE

In "Funeral Blues" by W.H. Auden, the somber tone and melancholic mood reflect profound grief and loss.

TONE AND MOOD

- Determine the tone of the poem (e.g., joyful, melancholic, angry) and how it influences the reader's perception.
- Identify the mood created by the poem and its effect on the audience.

