**TPCASTT**

* an analysis method for poetry —

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| **T**itle | Before reading a poem, speculate on what you think the poem *might* be about based upon only the title. Often time authors conceal meaning, or give clues to the main idea, in the title. |
| **Now, read the poem. Once read, look at the following areas…** | |
| **P**araphrase | Before thinking about the meaning of a poem, identify the literal meaning of the poem.  When you paraphrase a poem, write in your own words exactly what happens in the poem (the literal meaning of the poem). Look at the number of sentences in the poem—your paraphrase should have roughly the same number—essentially this is a word for word, line by line, translation.  Note: *paraphrase* is NOT the same as *summarize*. *Summarization* is an abridged recap, and therefore would be MUCH shorter than the poem itself |
| **C**onnotation | This term usually refers to the emotional overtones of word choice, as well as any and all poetic devices. You should focus on how such devices contribute to the meaning, the effect, or both, of a poem. Consider the following elements when looking at connotation:   * imagery * figures of speech (simile, metaphor, personification, symbolism, allusion, etc.) * diction (intentional word choice) * point of view (the speaker of the poem and his/her impact on the content) * sound devices (alliteration, onomatopoeia, consonance, assonance, rhythm, rhyme, etc.)   It is not necessary that you identify all the poetic devices within the poem, but it is key that you note the ones that most impact the meaning of the poem itself. |
| **A**ttitude | Keeping the connotation in mind, identify the poem’s attitude/tone. Ask yourself, “what is the speaker’s attitude about the main idea of the poem?”  Note: the tone/attitude often can not be captured with a single word. Often a phrase or a sentence is necessary. When one word will do, always insure that it is the best word: stay away from overly general descriptors such as “dark,” “nice,” and/or “sad.” |
| **S**hift | Rarely does a poem begin and end in the same poetic place. Often, a speaker’s understanding of an experience is a gradual realization, and the therefore the poem is a reflection of that growing understanding/insight. Watch for the following keys to note when a shift occurs:   * key words (but, yet, however, although) * punctuation (dashes, periods, colons, ellipsis) * stanza divisions / abrupt line breaks * changes in line length, stanza length, or both * a sudden ironic element * changes in sound that may indicate changes in meaning * changes in diction (specifically the diction’s tone) |
| **T**itle (revisited) | Revisit the title by looking at it again, but this time keeping in mind what you already know about the poem. Ask yourself, “knowing what I do now, does the title provide an insight/meaning to the poem that I previously did not note?” and, “how does the poem’s title contribute to the overall meaning of the poem?” |
| **T**heme | What does the poem say about the human experience, motivation, or condition? What idea does the poet want you take away with you concerning the human experience?  The following are the six traits of a well written theme:   1. it should be expressed in a statement with a subject and a predicate (a complete sentence) 2. it should be stated as a generalization about the human experience: specific characters, locations, and dates are unnecessary 3. Avoid making a generalizations larger than what is justified by the terms of the story 4. A theme is the central and unifying concept of a piece, thereby it must account for all major details in the poem and can not be contradicted by any details in the poem (nor can it rely upon supposed facts) 5. There is no one way to state a theme: one theme may be phrased in a variety of ways 6. Avoid reducing a theme to a familiar saying or cliché that has been heard by many, such as “Don’t judge a book by its cover,” or “You must walk in another man’s shoes in order to fully understand him.” |

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