**How to Analyze Poetry**

Poetry is the dramatization of experience in metrical language. To study or analyze poetry, one must consider many elements. A good way to start is by reading the poem silently. Then read the poem a second (third, fourth) time aloud. Reading the poem aloud makes its meaning clearer and you will hear the various poetic sound devices such as alliteration, rhyme, rhythm, etc. Then try writing down a brief summary to make sure that you are understanding the poem. Remember to read sentence by sentence, or rather stop by stop, not line by line. A stop could be a period or a colon or a semi-colon.

**Questions To Answer Before Writing**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. | Who is speaking? |  | 10. | End rhyme scheme? |
| 2. | To whom? |  | 11. | Alliteration? |
| 3. | About? |  | 12. | Assonance? |
| 4. | Tone? |  | 13. | Consonance? |
| 5. | Examples of abstract imagery? |  | 14. | Caesura? |
| 6. | Examples of concrete imagery? |  | 15. | Enjambment? |
| 7. | Examples of denotative language? |  | 16. | Theme? |
| 8. | Examples of the (5) figurative devices? |  | 17. | Rhythm / Meter? |
| 9. | Examples of rhetorical devices? |  | 18. | Syntax? |

**Writing Your Paper**

The actual writing of the paper is probably the easiest task because you have already identified everything that needs to be covered. You may wish to cover all the important items in your own order, however, the order listed above does work well.

Most likely you will not be able to simply write a few lines for each device, rather you must group these devices together. A proper order of paragraphs may flow like this:

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| I. | Dramatic Situation |

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | A. | Who is speaking? |
|  | B. | To whom is that speaker speaking? |
|  | C. | What is the situation? |
|  | D. | What is the speaker's tone? |
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| II. | Imagery |
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| III. | Theme |
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| IV. | Diction (word choice) |

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|  | A. | Connotation (suggested meaning of words) |
|  | B. | Denotation (dictionary definition) |
|  | C. | Abstract (can only be understood intellectually) |
|  | D. | Concrete (words describing physical objects) |
|  | E. | Kinds of language |

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|  |  | 1. | Figurative |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  | a. | Metaphor (implied comparisons) |
|  |  |  | b. | Simile (comparison using 'like' or 'as') |
|  |  |  | c. | Personification (giving human characteristics to an inanimate object) |
|  |  |  | d. | Metonymy (the use of an attribute or quality of an object to represent the object itself) |
|  |  |  | e. | Synecdoche (substitutes a significant part of something for the thing itself) |

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|  |  | 2. | Rhetorical |

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|  |  |  | a. | Irony (opposite of what is meant) |
|  |  |  | b. | Hyperbole (exaggeration) |
|  |  |  | c. | Allusion (reference to something) |
|  |  |  | d. | Pun (play on words) |
|  |  |  | e. | Paradox (contradictory) |
|  |  |  | f. | Oxymoron (self contradictory term) |
|  |  |  | g. | Litotes (form of understatement) |
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| V. | Syntax (sentence structure) |

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|  | A. | Length |
|  | B. | Transposed elements |
|  | C. | "Unusual" sentences |

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| --- | --- |
| VI. | Conclusion |
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Remember, when you are writing this paper you should use direct quotes wherever you can, you should vary your sentence structure, and all rules of grammar still apply.

Notes: You must be able to support your interpretations with references to the poem. Do not make unsupportable inferences.

All parts of your interpretation must fit together logically – the poem is a unity, with every part working logically and artistically with every other par.