

TP-CASTT: A Method for Poetry Analysis

Title -- Examine the title before reading the poem. Consider connotations.

Paraphrase -- Translate the poem into your own words, sentence by sentence. (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 (continues on next line) vs. end-stopped lines

Connotation -- Examine the poem for meaning beyond the literal.

Look for: Diction
Imagery (especially metaphor, simile, personification)
Symbolism
Irony
Allusions
Effect of sound devices (alliteration, onomatopoeia, assonance, consonance, rhyme)

Attitude -- tone: Examine both the speaker's and the poet's attitudes. Remember, don't confuse the author with the persona.

Look for: Speaker's attitude toward self, other characters, and the subject.
Attitudes of characters other than speaker
Poet's attitude toward speaker, other characters, subject, and finally toward the reader.

Shifts -- Note shifts in speaker, attitudes, and their possible links to the poem's meaning.

Look for: Occasion of poem (time & place)
Key words (e.g. but, yet)
Punctuation (dashes, periods, colons, etc.)
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 interpretive level.

Theme -- First *list* what the poem is about (subjects); then *determine* what the poet is saying about each of those subjects (theme). Remember, theme must be expressed as a *complete sentence* and in *universal* terms that can apply to everyone.