

TP-CASTT A Method for Analyzing Poetry

Title

Examine the title before reading the poem. Consider connotations.

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 sentence rather than line by line)

Connotation

Examine the poem for meaning beyond the literal.

⇒Look for:

- Imagery (especially metaphor, simile, personification)
- Symbolism
- Irony (paradox, understatement, oxymoron)
- Allusion
- 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 the speaker
•Poet's attitude toward the speaker, other characters and finally toward the reader.

Shifts

Note shift in speaker and attitude.

⇒Look for: •Occasion of poem (time and place)
•Key words (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 the meaning

Title

Examine the title again, this time on an interpretive level

Theme

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