

Analyzing Poetry

T

Title: What does the title mean literally? Complete this before reading the poem.

P

Paraphrase: What does the poem mean beyond the literal? After reading the poem, what does it mean literally in your own words? (This can be very difficult when a poem has abstract meaning.)

C

Connotation: What does the poem mean beyond the literal? Painstakingly go through the poem, jotting down every word that possesses a meaning alternate from the one assigned to it in the poem. This kind of analysis can reveal hidden meanings and plays on words that might otherwise have remained unseen.

A

Attitude: What is/are the feeling(s) expressed by the author? What feelings does it arouse in you, the reader (mood)? What emotions do you think the poet wanted to awaken? Watch punctuation, word choice and sound usage for clues. (Soft words like "slide," "feather," "laughter" usually add a gentle feel, while words with harsh sounds like "corked," "guzzle," "battled" can lend a clipped, acrimonious atmosphere.)

S

Shift: What changes in speakers and attitudes occur in the poem? Where does the shift in thought arrive? There should be a break, when the speaker ends one manner of speech, changes point of view, or pauses to consider something other than the subject. This is known as the shift, referring to the shift in thought. That place is generally the turning point of the poem, and it's important to understand where and why the shift occurred in your poem.

T

Title: After unlocking the puzzle of the poem itself, return to the title. The connotations you uncovered before analyzing the body can now be matched up to your results to see if they apply, or add any fresh perspectives.

T

Theme: What does the poem mean? What is it saying? How does it relate to life?