

- Rhyme scheme: the pattern of end-rhymes in a poem
- Line: words of a poem that stretch to the right margin of the paper
- Stanza: a “paragraph” in poetry, identified by skipped lines
- Meter: the pattern of beats within a line of poetry
- Refrain: words or lines that are repeated in poetry
- Motif: sense of mood or atmosphere used to set a scene (i.e. Mexican music and wall hangings in a restaurant)
- English sonnet: popular 14-line poetic form made famous by William Shakespeare with the following rhyme scheme (abab cdcd efef gg); contains 3 quatrains and a rhyming couplet
- Haiku: short form poetry originating in Asia; containing three lines with the meter (575)—five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, five in the third

Generally how to close read poetry:

1. Look at the title
2. Read the poem to try to find the major indicators of its meaning. How do different factors like setting, subject, voice/point of view, affect and direct your reading
3. Carefully consider the ending and how the poem "gets there"
4. Consider the organization of the poem and how it proceeds (is there a climax, sequences of some kinds, oppositions/mirrors)
5. Pay attention to how the poem treats the subject: consider the kind of words used, tone, etc
6. Once you have close read, questions to apply to your analysis...

What is the genre or form of the poem? Is it a sonnet, lyric, narrative, epic, etc. Different genres have different subjects, conventions, and attributes. Recognizing these nuances is an important aspect of your close reading.

7. Who is the speaker in the poem?

The "I" speaking in the poem is NOT necessarily the author. It is the voice in the poem that speaks. Make sure you can identify the voice and what it has to do with what is happening in the poem. Also consider the tone of the speaker. What is the point of view of the speaker?

3. What is the argument, thesis, or subject of the poem?

What is the poem "about"? Start with the basics and move to important statements, conflicts, tensions, nuances. Also consider the historical, social, and emotional settings.

4. Consider the structure of the poem?

There are two basic kinds of structure, formal and thematic.

Formal structure is the way the poem goes together in terms of its component parts: if there are parts -- stanza's, paragraphs or such -- then there will be a relation between the parts (for instance the first stanza may give the past, the second the present, the third the future).

Thematic structure, known in respect to fiction as 'plot', is the way the argument or presentation of the material of the poem is developed. For instance a poem might state a problem in eight lines, an answer to the problem in the next six; of the eight lines stating the problem, four might provide a concrete example, four a reflection on what the example implies. There may well be very close relations between formal and thematic structure. When looking at thematic structure, you might look for conflicts, ambiguities and uncertainties, the tensions in the poem, as these give clear guides to the direction of meanings in the poem, the poem's 'in-tensions'.

5. What about setting?

There are two kinds of setting: the setting in terms of time and place and secondly setting in terms of the psychological world that is described in the poem.

In terms of the physical world of the poem, setting can be used for a variety of purposes. A tree might be described in specific detail, a concrete, specific, tree; or it might be used in a more tonal way, to create mood or associations, with say the wind blowing mournfully through the willows; or it might be used as a motif, the tree that reminds me of Kathryn, or of my youthful dreams; or it might be used symbolically, as for instance an image of organic life; or it might be used allegorically, as a representation of the cross of Christ (allegory ties an image or event to a specific interpretation, a doctrine or idea; symbols refer to broader, more generalized meanings).

6. Imagery

Imagery refers to any sort of image in a poem. This can be the image of the psychological setting or images seen in metaphors and similes.

7. How does the sound of the poem contribute to meaning?

Consider the rhythm of a poem and how it contributes to the meaning

8. Consider the language used in the poem.

What kind of words are used? What role does association or intertextuality play? (discuss intertextuality)

9. Your own biases

How does your culture/experience/gender/privilege/class affect your reading of the text?

Hints

1. Try reading the poem out loud. Start noticing how words sound, connect, etc