

Module 1- Unit 1

How to Appreciate a Poem?

Appreciating Poem is the process of evaluating, comprehending, and interpreting a literary work from a critical perspective. This critical reading includes the meaning of the words, the speaker, the rhyme scheme, figures of speech, references to other works (intertextuality), the style of language, the poet's general writing style (if mentioned), the genre, the context, the speaker's tone, and so on. It is the act of comprehending the verse and examining the independent elements to understand the poem in its entirety. Analyzing poems line by line allows you to break poems down in order to study their structure, form, language, metrical pattern, and theme. The purpose of literary analysis is to interpret the meaning of a poem and appreciate it on a deeper level.

Step One: Read

Read the poem at least twice to yourself.

Step Two: Title

A poem's title is important because it's the first thing readers see, and it can help them understand the poem's meaning, tone, and structure.

How a poem's title can be significant:

1. Provides context: The title can give readers a sense of the poem's subject matter, theme, or tone.
2. Sets the tone: The title can indicate whether the poem is serious, playful, ironic, or satirical.
3. Suggests meaning: The title can hint at the poem's central idea, message, or argument.
4. Offers interpretive possibilities: The title can suggest different ways to read and understand the poem.
5. Provides a framework: The title can help readers navigate the poem by organizing its structure, form, and content.
6. Clarifies imagery: The title can help clarify the meaning behind complex or abstract imagery within the poem.
7. Amplifies emotional weight: The title can amplify the emotional weight of the poem.

Think about the title and how it relates to the poem. Titles often provide important clues about what is at the heart of a piece. Likewise, a title may work ironically or in opposition to a poem.

Step Three: Speaker

Understanding the speaker is at the centre of a poem may help the piece appear more tangible to students because they're able to imagine a person behind the language. Questions to consider are:

1. Who “tells” the poem?
2. Does the poem give any clues about the speaker’s personality, the point of view, age, or gender?
3. Who is the speaker addressing?
4. Does the speaker seem attached or detached from what is said?

Step Four: Mood and Tone

After talking about the speaker, it’s important to address the attitude or mood the poem is attempting to convey. Some can be brooding or grieving; others may have a song-like cadence and rhyme. Think about the attitude each speaker or characters give off. Moreover, try to find out if there places where the poem's tone may switch and why. Syntax and the effect of words on the reader also should be discussed.

Step Five: Paraphrase

Since you discussed figurative language, mood, setting, and speaker—there’s no better time than to apply what you’ve learned line-by-line. Paraphrasing may seem pretty self-explanatory. However, keep in mind this is not about skipping lines or condensing. Instead you should lead students line-by-line and translate figurative language or unclear phrases into simpler terms that will not get in the way of analyzing the poem later on.

Step Six: Theme

Last but not least, it’s time to get to the core of what the poem is about by identifying its theme. The theme of a poem relates to a universal truth, issue, or conflict. To determine the theme, look over all of your analysis and connect the dots:

What is the subject?

Who is the speaker?

What situation are they in?

How do they feel about the subject?

What is the mood?

Reading poetry is a rewarding experience in and of itself. But to really see how all of the elements of a poem work together, we should study the qualities and characteristics of each.