

Grade 12 English: Poetry & Visual Literacy Study Guide

Grade 12 | English Home Language | Study Guide | 2024

Free Study Resources for South African Matric Learners

1. Approaching Poetry

SMILE Framework for Poetry Analysis

- S - Structure: how is the poem arranged? Stanzas, line length, free verse or rhyme scheme?
- M - Meaning: what is the poem about literally? What deeper message (theme)?
- I - Imagery: what images/word pictures are created? Which senses do they appeal to?
- L - Language: tone, word choice (diction), figurative language, sound devices
- E - Effect: what is the overall effect on the reader? How does the poem make you feel?

2. Key Poetic Devices

- Rhyme scheme: pattern of end rhymes (ABAB, ABBA, AABB, free verse)
- Rhythm/Metre: stressed and unstressed syllables; iambic pentameter (Shakespeare)
- Enjambment: sentence continues past end of line without punctuation (creates flow)
- Caesura: pause within a line (often marked by punctuation)
- Stanza: group of lines; quatrain (4), sestet (6), octet (8)
- Sonnet: 14-line poem; Shakespearean (3 quatrains + couplet) or Petrarchan (octet + sestet)
- Tone: speaker's attitude (bitter, nostalgic, ironic, celebratory, sorrowful)
- Voice: who is speaking the poem (persona)

3. Answering Poetry Questions

Steps to follow in exams:

1. Read the poem TWICE before answering
2. Annotate: underline devices, circle important words, note tone
3. For each question: refer to line numbers and quote from the poem
4. Explain the EFFECT of the device, not just identify it

TIP Never say "the poet uses alliteration to make the poem sound nice." Always explain the SPECIFIC effect: "The alliteration of 's' sounds in 'slowly sinking sun' creates a sense of peace and slow passage of time."

4. Visual Literacy

Visual texts: cartoons, advertisements, photographs, infographics, posters.

Reading Advertisements

- Target audience: who is the ad aimed at? (age, gender, income, lifestyle)
- Purpose: to persuade, inform, entertain, sell
- Slogan: short, memorable phrase
- Visual elements: colours, font size/type, images, layout, white space
- Persuasive techniques: bandwagon, celebrity endorsement, emotional appeal, fear, statistics

Reading Cartoons (Editorial/Political)

- Identify the characters/people depicted
- Read all text (speech bubbles, captions, labels)
- Identify the issue/topic being commented on
- Identify any symbolism (e.g. dove = peace)
- What is the cartoonist's message/satire?

Comment on any exaggeration (caricature)