GRADE 11 STUDY GUIDE | 2024

Poetry Analysis

English Home Language

1. Reading a Poem for the First Time

- Read through without stopping -- get the overall sense
- Read again, pausing at punctuation (NOT at line endings)
- Identify the SPEAKER (persona) -- not necessarily the poet
- Identify the SUBJECT (what the poem is literally about)
- Identify the THEME (what the poem is really saying -- the deeper meaning)

2. Poetic Techniques and Their Effects

Sound Devices

- Alliteration: repetition of initial consonant -- creates emphasis and rhythm
- Assonance: repetition of vowel sounds -- creates mood (short vowels = abrupt; long vowels = drawn out)
- Rhyme: end rhyme creates musicality; internal rhyme = within a line
- Onomatopoeia: sound echoes sense; draws reader into the scene
- Rhythm: the beat of the poem; regular rhythm = controlled/calm; irregular = chaotic/emotional

Imagery

- Simile, metaphor, personification, symbolism
- Visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory (smell), gustatory (taste) imagery
- Always explain the EFFECT of the image on the reader

Structure

- Stanza: a group of lines (like a paragraph in poetry)
- Line length variation: short lines = pause/emphasis; long lines = flow/urgency
- Enjambment: line runs into next without punctuation -- creates forward movement
- Volta: a turning point or shift in the poem (often between octave and sestet in Petrarchan sonnet)

3. Poetic Forms

- Sonnet: 14 lines; Shakespearean (3 quatrains + couplet, ABAB rhyme) or Petrarchan (octave + sestet)
- Free verse: no regular rhyme or metre; conversational; relies on imagery
- Elegy: poem mourning a death or loss
- Ode: poem of praise or celebration
- Ballad: narrative poem; often tells a story of love, tragedy or adventure; regular rhyme and rhythm

4. Writing a Poetry Essay

- Introduce: name poem, poet, subject and central theme
- Develop: use TEEEC structure -- Topic sentence, Evidence (quote), Explanation, Effect, Conclude
- Analyse language: name device + quote + effect on reader/meaning
- Comment on structure and how it reinforces meaning
- Conclude: relate back to overall theme/message