Poetry Analysis

- Uncovers the author's intentions by examining language, literary devices, and cultural context, while interpreting the work as a whole.
- Prioritizes analyzing the poem line by line and connecting details to the main ideas.

Steps for Close Reading

1. **Reading for Comprehension**

- Understand the literal events in the poem.
  - **Example:** The narrator walks through a winter forest, noticing falling leaves.
- Note the situation and attitude of the narrator or speaker.
- Identify the general point or story.

2. **Questioning the Passage**

- Ask what the passage reveals about the narrator.
  - **Example:** The narrator is lonely and reflective.
- Ask what it reveals about other characters.
- Ask if there is a hidden or implied meaning

3. **Analyze Language**

- Observe word choice, adjectives, and descriptive phrases.
  - **Example:** "The crimson sky burned at dusk" is vivid and dramatic imagery.
- Examine pronouns and references.
- Identify metaphors, symbolism, and other literary devices.
- Connect the passage to other passages or works.

4. **Consider Elements**

Speaker

- Identify if the poem is in first-person, is a personal observation, or about someone else.

Theme

- Identify significant themes such as love, death, war, peace, etc.

    - **Example:** Grief and memory in Whitman's elegy for Lincoln.

Genre

- Determine the type of poem such as a sonnet, ode, elegy, satire, epic, lyrical.

    - **Example:** Sonnet 18 is a 14-line poem with iambic pentameter.

- Consider if the poem follows a literary movement.

    - **Examples:** Romanticism, Modernism, Renaissance, etc.

Tone or Mood

- Identify the emotions evoked in the poem such as joy, sorrow, anger, peace, etc.

    - **Example:** Wordsworth's nature poetry has a calm and peaceful mood.

- Notice irony, satire, or humor.

- Read the poem aloud to catch rhythm and tone.

Versification

- Examine rhyme scheme, meter, and syllable patterns.

    - **Example:** ABAB rhyme in a Shakespearean sonnet.

Word Choice

- Observe connotations vs. denotations.

- **Connotation:** The emotional or cultural associations a word carries.

    - **Example:** The word "bitter" evokes both taste and emotional pain.

- **Denotation:** The literal, dictionary meaning of a word.

Imagery

- Observe sensory details such as sight, sound, smell, taste, touch.

  - **Example:** The aroma of baked bread filled the kitchen, warm and comforting.

5. **Cultural Context**

- Consider the historical or cultural background.

  - **Example:** Whitman's poem reflects post-Civil War mourning in the U.S.

6. **Writing Techniques**

- Note end-stopped lines, enjambment, or caesura.

- **End-stopped line:** Ends with punctuation, creating a pause.

  - **Example:** "The sun sets slowly, / painting the sky in gold."

- **Enjambment:** Runs over to the next line without a pause.

  - **Example:** "The wind blew / through the night / and carried whispers of forgotten songs."

- **Caesura:** Pause in the middle of a line.

  - **Example:** "To be, or not to be — that is the question."

After Reading the Poem

1. **Interpret the Poem**

- Develop a thesis that argues a point about the poem.

  - **Example:** Whitman's elegy conveys the deep emotional impact of Lincoln's death while celebrating national resilience.

- Support your thesis using language, imagery, figures of speech, tone, and cultural context.

- Analyze what the different elements reveal about the writer's perspective.

- Consider if you agree or disagree with what the writer is expressing?

2. **Identify Figures of Speech**

Figure of Speech	Definition	Example
Metaphor	A comparison between two unlike things without using "like" or "as".	Time is a thief.
Simile	A comparison between two unlike things using "like" or "as".	Her eyes sparkled like stars.
Metonymy	A word or phrase represents something closely related.	"The crown" = the king.
Synecdoche	A part represents the whole.	"All hands on deck" = the crew.
Personification	Assigns human characteristics to a non-human thing.	The wind whispered through the trees.
Litotes	Uses a double negative to create emphasis.	"Not unlike" or "not displeased."
Irony	A difference between what is said and what is meant or expected.	Saying "Lovely weather" during a storm.

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Poetry Analysis Outline

Introduction: Introduce the poem and author then present a strong thesis statement.

Body Paragraph 1: Examine the literal events of the poem and analyze the speaker's voice.

Body Paragraph 2: Examine one aspect of language at a time per paragraph. (ex: word choice)

Body Paragraph 3: Analyze one figure of speech at a time per paragraph. (ex: metaphor)

Conclusion: Restate your thesis in new words, summarize your analysis points and reflect on the poem's impact.

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