**Analyzing Poetry**

One way to better understand poetry is by analyzing the elements that make it a poem, the devices and structure. Poems are written in closed or open form. Closed poems are written with specific patterns, using meter, line length, and poetry paragraphs or stanzas. Open form poems, or free verse poems, do not use regular rhythmic patters and are usually unrhymed, have a variety of line lengths and no set line groupings. As a reader, you are looking for the meaning behind these devices, and an investigation of the elements of a poem will help you understand the meaning.

The list below is a guide that will help you dissect poetry in order to better analyze and understand the meaning.

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| **1. DETERMINE THE SUBJECT OF THE POEM.** | * Paraphrase/summarize the poem what is it about? * Does the poem address a social, political, psychological, historical, or mythical phenomenon? * Is it written in response to a particular event? |
| **2. IDENTIFY THE POEM’S NARRATOR** | * Who is speaking? * To whom? * What are the circumstances? Identify the setting. |
| **3. NOTE THE DICTION (WORD CHOICE) OF THE POET** | * Look up ANY unknown words in your dictionary * What are the words DENOTATIONS and CONNOTATIONS? * Are the words concrete or abstract? Symbolism * How does the word choice add to or detract from the meaning of the poem? |
| **4. DETERMINE THE TONE OF THE POEM?** | * Is the poem serious, ironic, satirical, thoughtful, ambiguous? Refer to tone list and a dictionary. * Highlight words that set the tone. * Determine where the tone shifts within the poem (it does, look for 3) |
| **5. DETERMINE THE RHYTHMICAL DEVICES USED BY THE POET** | * What is the basic metrical pattern? Line length? * What is the length of the stanza? * What is the rhyme scheme? End rhyme? Internal rhyme? * Is it open or closed form? * What type of poem is it? |
| **6. LITERARY DEVICES** | * What allusions does the poem contain? * What sounds devices are used: Alliteration, Onomatopoeia, Assonance, consonance * What figurative devices are used: simile, metaphor, symbolism, imagery, irony personification, hyperbole, metonymy, allegory, paradox * Note the use, or lack of punctuation. * Titles are essential in poetry. |
| **7. INTERPRET THE MEANING OF THE POEM** | * What is the poet trying to say? * What does it mean to you? |
| **8. ARE THERE THEMES THAT YOU CAN IDENTIFY?** | * Identify the theme, refer back to “theme” document |