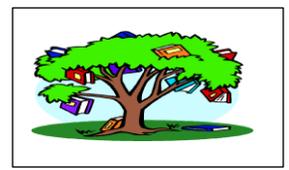


Toward Better Literacy: Reference Outlines



Reading Poetry

Poetry is *opaque*: the writer's purpose is hidden beneath the language. It takes *effort*, combining many strategies to give the reader what the poem offers.

- Know how the **words** work
 - **Denotation** is the dictionary definition of the word
 - **Connotation** is what the author is suggesting in the word with the accompanying emotional overtone
 - The **Tone** is the emotional effect carried across to the reader
 - **Probe** the definitions and syntax (word order and structure) to get at connotations, images, motifs and overall theme
- Ask **questions** such as:
 - What is being dramatized? Are there any conflicts?
 - Who is the speaker; what is the motive and reason to talk?
 - What happens in the poem and when?
- Pick up on the **imagery**
 - Poetry is meant to create images and impressions
 - Are there appeals to the five senses (sight, smell, hear, taste, touch)
 - **Similes** and **metaphors** establish meaning in one thing by comparing it to another thing that is unlike it.
 - Similes use "like" or "as"
 - What are the impressions created as to images and ideas?
- Identify **symbols**
 - Concrete images that refer the reader to something abstract
 - The meaning of the symbol is figurative and universal
 - Archetypal symbols are universals in our "collective conscious"
 - Hero, saint, quest, darkness, light, death, rebirth
- Trace the governing **motifs**
 - A recurring subject, theme or idea
- Finally, draw on your own **beliefs, attitudes, values** and **experiences**
 - A poem becomes meaningful when all of the above makes a "fit"

Types of Poetry:

- Narrative: the narrator describes the action
- Ballad: a poem narrating a popular story
- Elegy: a poem of lament
- Lyric: express emotion or share an idea
- Sonnet: 14 line poem; 10 syllables per line; any rhyme scheme
- Ode: lyric poem in form of an address; varied meter
- Dramatic Monologue: a scene created as background for insight
- Free verse: no restraints as to rhyme or meter