

Poetry Analysis Method

TP-CASTT - is an acronym for: title, paraphrase, connotation, attitude, shifts, title (again), and theme. This analysis method is designed to help one remember the concepts to consider when examining a poem.

Title - ponder the title before reading the poem. Make a prediction about what the poem will be about.

Paraphrase - translate the poem in your own words (literal meaning).

Connotation - Contemplate the poem for meaning beyond the literal. Usually “connotation” refers solely to the emotional overtones of word choice; here it indicates that one should examine the poetic devices in the poem, focusing on how they contribute to the meaning, the effect, and/or how they enhance the poem.

Attitude - Observe both the speaker’s and the poet’s attitude (tone). There may be multiple attitudes presented. Examine the diction, images, and details that suggest the attitude (s). How does this contribute to understanding?

Shifts - (Progression) - Rarely does a poet begin and end the poetic experience in the same place. The poet’s experience is the gradual realization, and the poem is the reflection of that epiphany. This is why this step is crucial to understanding the poem. Consider if there is a shift in speakers, in attitudes, or feelings.

Title - Examine the title again, this time on an interpretive level.

Theme - Determine what the poet is saying about his/her subject. What is the poet’s comment on life?