

Using TPCASTT

for Analysis of Poetry

T	<i>Title</i>	What do the words of the title suggest to you? What denotations are presented in the title? What connotations or associations do the words possess?		
P	<i>Paraphrase</i>	Translate the poem in your own words. What is the poem about?		
C	<i>Connotation</i>	What meaning does the poem have beyond the literal meaning? Fill in the chart below.		
		Form	Diction	Imagery
		Point of View	Details	Allusions
		Symbolism	Figurative Language	Other Devices (antithesis, apostrophe, sound devices, irony, oxymoron, paradox, pun, sarcasm, understatement)
A	<i>Attitude</i>	What is the speaker's attitude? How does the speaker feel about himself, about others, and about the subject? What is the author's attitude? How does the author feel about the speaker, about other characters, about the subject, and the reader?		
S	<i>Shifts</i>	Where do the shifts in tone, setting, voice, etc. occur? Look for time and place, keywords, punctuation, stanza divisions, changes in length or rhyme, and sentence structure. What is the purpose of each shift? How do they contribute to effect and meaning?		
T	<i>Title</i>	Reanalyze the title on an interpretive level. What part does the title play in the overall interpretation of the poem?		
T	<i>Theme</i>	List the subjects and the abstract ideas in the poem. Then determine the overall theme. What message is the author trying to convey? What lesson is being taught? The theme must be written in a complete sentence.		

D.U.C.A.T.S.

The "6 gold pieces" of writer's voice

Diction refers to a writer's (or speaker's) word choice with the following considerations:

- denotation / connotation
- degree of difficulty or complexity of a word
- monosyllabic / polysyllabic
- abstract / concrete
- euphony / cacophonous
- colloquial / formal / informal / technical
- tone of a word (the emotional charge a word carries)
- the *above* will often create a subtext for the text

Unity refers to the idea that all of the ideas in a written piece are relevant and appropriate to the focus. Some considerations:

- each claim (assertion, topic sentence) supports the thesis
- each piece of evidence is important and relevant to the focus of the paragraph or the piece of writing as a whole
- occasionally, a writer may choose to purposely violate the element of unity for a specific effect (some humorists / satirists will sometimes consciously do this)
- it is important to consider what has been omitted from a piece and examine the writer's intent in doing so

Coherence refers to the organization and logic of a piece of writing; some considerations include:

- precision and clarity in a thesis and supportive arguments
- the arguments ordered in the most effective way for the writer's intent
- the sentences and paragraphs "flow smoothly" for the reader; there should not be any abrupt leaps or gaps in the presentation of the ideas or story (unless the writer makes a conscious choice for a specific and appropriate effect)

Audience refers to the writer's awareness of who will be reading his or her piece of writing; some considerations are:

- Who are the targeted readers?
- How well informed are they on the subject? What does the writer want the reader to learn as a result of this piece?
- What first impression is created for the reader and how does the author's voice shape this first impression?
- How interested and attentive are they likely to be? Will they resist any of the ideas?
- What is the relationship between the writer and the reader? Employee to supervisor? Citizen to citizen? Expert to novice? Scholar to scholar? Student to teacher? Student to student?
- How much time will the reader be willing to spend reading?
- How sophisticated are the readers in regard to vocabulary and syntax?

Tone refers to a writer's ability to create an attitude toward the subject matter of a piece of writing. What does that attitude suggest about the author? The subject? What effect is produced by the writing and how is that effect produced? The tools a writer uses to create tone:

- Diction, Figurative language, Characterization, Plot, Theme, Structure

Syntax refers to the arrangement--the ordering, grouping, and placement--of words within a phrase, clause, or sentence. Some considerations:

- Type of sentence
- Length of sentence
- Subtle shifts or abrupt changes in sentence length or patterns
- Punctuation use
- Use of repetition
- Language patterns / rhythm / cadence

- How all of the above factors contribute to narrative pace
- The use of active and/or passive voice

S.O.A.P.S. Tone – Analyzing point of view

Speaker : Is there someone identified as the speaker? Can you make some assumptions about this person? What class does the author come from? What political bias can be inferred? What gender?

Occasion : What may have prompted the author to write this piece? What event led to its publication or development?

Audience : Does the speaker identify an audience? What assumptions can you make about the audience? Is it a mixed in terms of: race, politics, gender, social class, religion, etc.? Who was the document created for? Does the speaker use language that is specific for a unique audience? Does the speaker evoke: Nation? Liberty? God? History? Hell? Does the speaker allude to any particular time in history such as: Ancient Times? Industrial Revolution? World Wars? Vietnam?

Purpose : What is the speaker's purpose? In what ways does the author convey this message? What seems to be the emotional state of the speaker? How is the speaker trying to spark a reaction in the audience? What words or phrases show the speaker's tone? How is this document supposed to make you feel?

Subject : What is the subject of the piece? How do you know this? How has the subject been selected and presented by the author?

Tone : What is the author's attitude toward the subject? How is the writer's attitude revealed? The tools a writer uses to create are diction, figurative language, characterization, plot, theme, structure

S.O.A.P.S.Tone

(**S**ubject. **O**ccasion. **A**udience. **P**urpose.
Speaker. **T**one)

Subject	
Evidence (include quote)	
Occasion	Setting - Prompt -
Evidence (include quote)	
Audience	
Evidence (include quote)	
Purpose	
Evidence (include quote)	
Speaker	Who - Point-of-view -
Evidence (include quote)	
Tone	
Evidence (include quote)	

O.P.T.I.C.

Paying attention to the details is a habit that is a necessary part of effective analysis. As you analyze visual texts, including paintings, photographs, advertisements, maps, charts or graphs, the **OPTIC** strategy can help you construct meaning. As you examine a visual text, respond to each element:

Overview

Write a brief **overview** of the image: in one complete sentence, what is this image about?.

Parts

Key in on all of the **parts** by noting any details that seem important. This can be anything: color, figures, textures, scenery, groupings, shadings, patterns, numbers, etc.

Title / Text

Use the **title** to clarify the subject of the image. Consider both literal and metaphoric meanings. What does the title suggest? Is there any **text** in the image—a caption, or words in the image itself? What might this text suggest? What are the connotations?

Interrelationships

Discover the **interrelationships** in the image. How do the parts or pieces relate, both to one another and the image as a whole. Is there an evident perspective or point of view? What patterns do you see? How do the parts come together to reveal the artist's message?

Conclusion

Draw a **conclusion** about the meaning of the visual as a whole: think about what the artist, photographer, creator, or designer might be trying to capture and convey, and what ideas, arguments, or implications this image presents.

S.O.L.L.I.D.D.

Analyzing rhetorical elements & author's style

Syntax: Sentence structure

Organization: The structure of sections within a passage and as a whole. Movement in the passage between tones, ideas, defining literary/rhetorical strategies

Literary Devices: Metaphor, simile, personification, irony (situational, verbal and dramatic), hyperbole, allusion, alliteration, etc.

Levels of Discourse: Cultural levels of language act, with attendant traits (does the narrator's voice represent a particular social, political, or cultural viewpoint or perspective?)

Imagery: Deliberate vivid appeal to the audience's understanding through the five senses (visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory)

Diction: Word choice and its denotative and connotative significance

Detail: Descriptive items selected for inclusion. Concrete aspects of the poem or passage. What is included; what is omitted

Ingredients

Poem:

- Title
- Speaker/Persona/Voice
- Structure (prosody, verse, stanza, poetic form)
- Theme (direct/implied)
- Figures of Speech
- Symbolism

Fiction/Novel:

- Title
- Speaker
- Structure (plot elements, flashback, foreshadowing; fictional form)
- Theme (direct/implied)
- Character (direct/indirect; flat/round; static/dynamic; foil; stereotype)
- Setting (integral)
- Point of View (first/third; limited/omniscient; major/minor; reliable/näive; stream-of-consciousness)
- Figures of Speech
- Symbolism

Drama:

- Title
- Speaker
- Structure (plot elements, flashback, foreshadowing)
- Theme (direct/implied)
- Character (direct/indirect; flat/round; static/dynamic; foil; stereotype)
- Setting (staging, props, costumes)
- Figures of Speech
- Symbolism

Essay:

- Title
- Speaker
- Structure (thesis, introduction, evidence, conclusion; enumeration, chronological, compare/contrast. cause/effect)
- Purpose (inform, educate, persuade)
- Theme (direct/implied)
- Figures of Speech
- Rhetorical Devices
- Symbolism

P.A.T.T.R. For Analyzing Rhetoric

Purpose : Identify the author's purpose in writing; i.e., to persuade, to inform, to describe, to narrate. The writer may use one or all of three strategies --

- **pathos** (emotional appeal)
non-logical, senses, biases, prejudices, connotative language, euphemism, figurative language, friendly
- **logos** (logical appeal)
inductive deductive, syllogisms, enthymeme claims, evidence, testimony, quotes, facts, authority
- **ethos** (ethical appeal)
intelligence, virtue and good will; appeals to morals or prudence

Audience : Identify the author's intended audience, i.e., what readers would be more likely influenced and open to this writing.

Tone : Identify the author's attitude toward the subject and the audience, as expressed through devices like diction, imagery, details, language, and syntax. Be alert to the possibility of irony and satire.

Theme : Consider theme as an abstract concept coupled with an observation about life and human experience. Avoid theme statements that are too simplistic, judgmental, or moralizing, specific to the plot or characters of the particular writing, or include absolutes like *anyone, all, none, everything, everyone*.

Rhetorical devices : any device which persuades the audience to agree with the author

- **analogy**—making clear a concept by showing similarity to a more familiar concept
- **assertion**—suggestion for consideration as true or plausible
- **antithesis**—statement OPPOSED to another assertion
- **anticipate an objection**—addressing an objection before anyone else can raise the objection
- **concession**—an acknowledgement of objections to a proposal
- **direct address**—speaking directly to another
- **rebuttal**—final opposition to an assertion, disproving or refusing
- **red herring**—a statement that draws attention from the central issue
- **reduce to the absurd**—to show the foolishness of an argument
- **rhetorical question**—asking a question without desiring a response
- **specious reasoning**—having only apparent logic, not true logic but presented as such (see other side of handout)
- **under/over statement**—saying considerably more or less than a condition warrants, usually to be ironic

Logical Fallacies

Ad Homineum Fallacy — “to the man;” a person’s character is attacked instead of his argument

Ad Populum Fallacy — “to the crowd;” a misconception that a widespread occurrence of something is assumed to make it right or wrong

Bandwagon – threat of rejection is substituted for evidence, desire to conform to beliefs of a group

Begging the Question — assuming in a premise that which need to be proven

Biased Sample – conclusions drawn based upon a biased or prejudiced sample of evidence
Circular Reasoning — using two ideas to prove each other

Either/Or Fallacy — tendency to see an issue as having only two sides

False Analogy — making a misleading comparison between logically unconnected ideas

False Dilemma — committed when too few of the alternative are considered and all but one are assessed and deemed impossible or unacceptable

Guilt by Association – claim is rejected because disliked people accept the claim

Loaded Words — using highly connotative words to describe favorably or unfavorably without justification

Non Sequitur — “it does not follow;” an inference or conclusion that does not follow from the established premises/evidence

Oversimplification — tendency to provide simple solutions to complex problems

Pedantry — narrow-minded, trivial scholarship or arbitrary adherence to rules and forms

Poisoning the Well – discrediting what a person might later claim by presenting unfavorable information in advance

Post Hoc. Ergo Propter Hoc. — “after this, therefore because of this;” assuming that an incident that precedes another is the cause of the second incident

Slippery Slope – an assertion that some event must inevitably follow without any argument for the inevitability of the consequences

Straw Man – when a person ignores a person’s actual position and substitutes a distorted, exaggerated, or misrepresented version of that position

Illogical Appeals to . . .

- Authority
- Belief
- Common Practice
- Consequences of a Belief
- Emotion
- Fear
- Flattery
- Novelty
- Pity
- Popularity
- Rudicule
- Spite
- Tradition

S.T.A.A.RS.

- ★ **S Subject** (one word - literal subject)
- ★ **T Thematic Statement** (what the writer says about the subject up to this point - one complete sentence)
- ★ **A Attitude** (tone; what the writer feels about the subject - 3 tone words)
- ★ **A Audience** (To whom is the passage addressed?)
- ★ **R Rhetorical Strategies** (Choose one and cite it from the text)
- ★ **S** ↗

Rhetorical Strategies from which to Choose when Writing your STAARS

- ★ Diction - the specific words the writer uses and their connotations
- ★ Imagery - the way the writer uses the sense to create specific experiences (visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile)
- ★ Language - formal or informal? The specific type of language style the writer selects (scientific, jargon, colloquial, slang, professional)
- ★ Irony - a use of language which involves an incongruity between what one would expect and what actually occurs
- ★ Metaphor - when an author makes a comparison between two unlike situations
- ★ Organization - the way the writer sets up his piece (a letter, a speech, enumeration of salient points)
- ★ Syntax - the sentence structure the writer chooses (includes punctuation, use of italics, spacing, complex and/or compound sentences, sentence length)
- ★ Allusion - when a writer refers to another situation (historical, mythical, biblical)
- ★ Symbol - when a word means more than what it is
- ★ Figurative Language - a way of saying one thing, yet meaning another. Several important ones are listed above. Others include personification, alliteration, simile, paradox, metonymy, hyperbole, understatement
- ★ Point of View - the perspective from which the story is told; first or third (limited, objective, omniscient)
- ★ Tone (attitude) - the way the author feels about the subject
- ★ Logos, pathos, and ethos - rhetorical strategies of logic, emotion, or ethics
- ★ Detail - the facts or examples a writer uses to prove his/her point
- ★ Satire - exaggeration of a situation to ridicule human folly

Remember - you can note the type of strategy a writer employs; however, unless you explain how that "tool" contributes to the meaning of the passage or novel, you might as well be naming parts of a horse. Don't just name - EXPLAIN!

Write a paragraph explaining how the rhetorical strategy you chose contributes to the meaning of the passage following the format below.

- ★ **T Thematic Statement** -- including a **TAG** (title, author, genre)
- ★ **E Evidence** -- incorporate quotations from the text in a sentence which restates what you will explain; do not quote an entire sentences from the text; find the integral part of the sentence
- the example of the literary element
- ★ **A Analysis** - explain how this strategy contributes to meaning of the overall passage
- ★ **R Response** - Your response (without using first person) to the passage

Example of a **STAARS** assignment from the essay "The Death of the Moth"

STAARS - "The Death of the Moth"

S -- the death of a moth
T -- the author's observation of a moth fighting to stay alive and its final death
A -- pensive, compassionate, solemn
A -- educated people
RS -- diction "pity" "helplessness" "animation" "extraordinary"

Virginia Woolf's philosophical essay "The Death of the Moth" pensively and compassionately describes the insignificant life of a moth and its struggle to beat a solemn death. In the essay, the author watches the "animation" of a moth and feels "pity" for its "helplessness" and its "extraordinary" struggle against death. The author's word choice of "animation" creates a feeling of life and energy. It implies the moth living life to its fullest capacity within the boundaries that it has. The author feels "pity" for this moth, explain her benevolence and elevating the moth above humanity. She respects the moth's hard struggle to stay alive which is something that most people are unaware of and find insignificant. The "extraordinary" struggle describes the remarkable and amazing fight the moth gives at the end, as death gets closer. This fills the author with compassion and respect. The essay describes the wonder of life and the unexpected events that change it and influence our views and emotions in our own lives.

**Ideas and handout from Diana Bjornson*

D.I.D.L.S. A mnemonic for literary analysis

Diction: the denotative and connotative meanings of words What words does the author choose? Consider his/her word choice compared to another. Why did the author choose that particular word? What are the connotations of that word choice?

- different words for the same thing often suggest different attitudes (happy vs. content vs. ecstatic)
- denotative vs. connotative (dead vs. passed away)
- concrete vs. abstract (able to perceive with 5 senses, tangible, vs. an idea or concept that exists in one's mind, intangible)
- monosyllabic vs. polysyllabic (Cats eat meat; felines are carnivorous animals.)
- simple vs. ornate
- positive vs. negative (slender vs. skinny, determined vs. stubborn)
- colloquial / informal / formal / technical
- cacophonous vs. euphonious (e.g., harsh sounding, raucous, croak **or** pleasant sounding, languid, murmur)

Images: Vivid appeals to understanding through the five senses – sight, sound, touch, taste, smell. (What images does the author use? What does he/she focus on in a sensory way? How do the kinds of images the author puts in or leaves out reflect his/her style? Are they vibrant? Prominent? Plain? (NOTE: Images differ from detail in the degree to which they appeal to the senses. A farmer and a real estate developer would use different imagery to describe the same piece of land. Imagery would differ in a romantic vs. realistic description of the countryside.)

Details: Facts that are included or those that are omitted. What details does the author choose to include? What do they imply? What does the author choose to exclude? What are the connotations of the choice of details? (NOTE: Details are facts or fact-lets. They differ from images in that they don't have a strong sensory appeal. Hard Copy vs. CNN vs. NPR)

Language: The overall use of language such as formal, clinical, informal, slang What is the overall impression of the language the author uses? Does it reflect education? A particular profession? Intelligence? Is it plain? Ornate? Simple? Clear? Figurative? Poetic? Make sure you don't skip this step. Ambassador will speak differently than a cop or a kid.

Sentence Structure: How the author's use of sentence structure affects the reader What are the sentences like? Are they simple with one or two clauses? Do they have multiple phrases? Are they choppy? Flowing? Sinuous like a snake? Is there antithesis, chiasmus, parallel construction? What emotional impression do they leave? If we are talking about poetry, what is the meter? Is there a rhyme scheme? Long flowing sentences give us a different feeling than short choppy ones. If the narrator has awkward sentence structure, we might think he is uneducated or fearful. Sophisticated mature sentences might suggest artistic creativity.

So What?

DIDLS: The Key to TONE

DICTION:

- Laugh: guffaw, chuckle, titter, giggle, cackle, snicker, roar, chortle, guffaw, yuk
- Self-confident: proud, conceited, egotistical, stuck-up, haughty, smug, condescending
- House: home, hut, shack, mansion, cabin, home, residence, dwelling, crib, domicile
- Old: mature, experienced, antique, relic, senior, ancient, elderly, senescent, venerable
- Fat: obese, plump, corpulent, portly, porky, burly, husky, full-figured, chubby, zaftig

IMAGES: The use of vivid descriptions or figures of speech that appeal to sensory experiences helps to create the author's *tone*.

- My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun. (restrained)
- An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king. (somber, candid)
- He clasps the crag with crooked hands. (dramatic)
- Love sets you going like a fat gold watch. (fanciful)
- Smiling, the boy fell dead. (shocking)

DETAILS: Details are most commonly the *facts* given by the author or speaker as support for the attitude or tone. The speaker's perspective shapes what details are given and which are not.

LANGUAGE: Like word choice, the language of a passage has control over tone. Consider language to be the entire body of words used in a text, not simply isolated bits of diction. For example, an invitation to a wedding might use formal language, while a biology text would use scientific and clinical language.

- When I told Dad that I had goofed the exam, he blew his top. (slang)
- I had him on the ropes in the fourth and if one of my short rights had connected, he'd have gone down for the count. (jargon)
- A close examination and correlation of the most reliable current economic indexes justifies the conclusion that the next year will witness a continuation of the present, upward market trend. (turgid, pedantic)

SENTENCE STRUCTURE: How a sentence is constructed affects what the audience understands. Sentence structure affects *tone*.

- Parallel syntax (similarly styled phrases and sentences) creates interconnected emotions, feelings and ideas.
- Short sentences are punchy and intense. Long sentences are distancing, reflective and more abstract.
- Loose sentences point at the end. Periodic sentences point at the beginning, followed by modifiers and phrases.
- The inverted order of an interrogative sentence cues the reader to a question and creates tension between speaker and listener.
- Short sentences are often emphatic, passionate or flippant, whereas longer sentences suggest greater thought.

SHIFT IN TONE: Good authors are rarely monotone. A speaker's attitude can shift on a topic, or an author might have one attitude toward the audience and another toward the subject. The following are some clues to watch for shifts in tone:

- key words (but, yet, nevertheless, however, although)
- punctuation (dashes, periods, colons)
- paragraph divisions
- changes in sentence length
- sharp contrasts in diction

TONE

Tone is defined as the writer's or speaker's attitude toward the subject and the audience. Understanding tone in prose and poetry can be challenging because the reader doesn't have voice inflection to obscure or to carry meaning. Thus, an appreciation of word choice, details, imagery, and language all contribute to the understanding of tone. To misinterpret tone is to misinterpret meaning.

Angry	Sad	Sentimental	Afraid
Sharp	Cold	Fanciful	Detached
Upset	Urgent	Complimentary	Contemptuous
Silly	Joking	Condescending	Happy
Boring	Poignant	Sympathetic	Confused
Apologetic	Hollow	Childish	Humorous
Joyful	Peaceful	Horrific	Allusive
Mocking	Sarcastic	Sweet	Objective
Nostalgic	Vexed	Vibrant	Zealous
Tired	Frivolous	Irrelevant	Bitter
Audacious	Benevolent	Dreamy	Shocking
Seductive	Restrained	Somber	Candid
Proud	Giddy	Pitiful	Dramatic
Provocative	Didactic	Lugubrious	Sentimental

Students need to use dictionaries for definitions of the tone words listed above. Students need explicit dictionary meanings to establish subtle differences between tone words such as *emotional*, *sentimental*, and *lugubrious*, so that they can accurately comment on a work that appeals to the emotions, emphasizes emotion over reason, or becomes emotional to the point of being laughable. Keeping a list of precise tone words, and adding to it, sharpens students' articulation in stating tone.