Poetry Instruction

Advanced Placement Summer Institute

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Peter Viereck

Vale[1] *from Carthage (Spring, 1944)*

I, now at Carthage.[2] He, shot dead at Rome.
Shipmates last May. "And what if one of us,"
I asked last May, in fun, in gentleness,
"Wears doom, like dungarees, and doesn't know?"
He laughed, *"Not see Times Square*[3] *again?"* The foam,
Feathering across that deck a year ago,
Swept those five words—like seeds—beyond the seas
    Into his future. There they grew like trees;
    And as he passed them there next spring, they laid
    Upon his road of fire their sudden shade.
Though he had always scraped his mess-kit pure
And scrubbed redeemingly his barracks floor,
Though all his buttons glowed their ritual-hymn
Like cloudless moons to intercede for him,
No furlough fluttered from the sky. He will
Not see Times Square—he will not see—he will
Not see Times
    change; at Carthage (while my friend,
Living those words at Rome, screamed in the end)
I saw an ancient Roman's tomb and read
"*Vale*" in stone. Here two wars mix their dead:
    Roman, my shipmate's dream walks hand in hand
    With yours tonight ("New York again" and "Rome"),
    Like widowed sisters bearing water home
    On tired heads through hot Tunisian sand
    In good cool urns, and says, "I understand."
Roman, you'll see your Forum Square no more;
What's left but this to say of any war?

[1] *Vale* is the Latin word for farewell.
[2] Carthage is the site of the famous ancient city in Tunisia, North Africa. In ancient times the rivalry between Rome and Carthage culminated in the Punic Wars. In World War II, Tunisia again figured prominently.
[3] Times Square is the bustling center of New York City—the theater district.

Directions: *Read the following poem carefully. Then answer fully and explicitly the questions which follow it. Use complete sentences.*

1. Is the structure of the three opening sentences justifiable in this particular poem? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Why do the three place names — Carthage, Rome, and Times Square — create the particular emotional effects present in this poem?
3. Interpret each of the following portions of the poem so as to show how it contributes to the effectiveness of the poem as a whole:
    a. *Wears doom, like dungarees* (line 4);
    b. …. *they laid*
    Upon his road of fire their sudden shade (lines 9-10);
    c. *No furlough fluttered from the sky* (line 15);
    d. *Living these words* (line 19);
    e. *Like widowed sisters* (line 24).
4. To whom does *I* refer in line 26? What is it that is understood?
5. To how much may *this* refer in the final line of the poem?

TP-COASTT: a mnemonic for poetry

Title	The title is part of the poem; consider any multiple meanings.
Paraphrase	Rephrase the poem using your words.
Connotation	Contemplate the poem for meaning beyond the literal.
Organization	Identify organizational patterns, visual, temporal, spatial, abstract
Attitude	Identify the tone—both the speaker's and the poet's attitude
Shifts*	Locate shifts in speaker, tone, setting, syntax, diction…
Title	Examine the title again, this time on an interpretive level
Theme	Determine what the poem says

*Shifts	
Signals	Key words (*still, but, yet, although, however…*)
	Punctuation (consider every punctuation mark)
	Stanza or paragraph divisions
	Changes in line length or stanza length or both
Types	Structure (how the work is organized)
	Changes in syntax (sentence length and construction)
	Changes in sound (rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, assonance…)
	Changes in diction (slang to formal language, for example)
Patterns	Are the shifts sudden? progressive? recursive? Why?

Ten Easy Lessons in How to Read Poetry… and Get Something Out of It

0. *Notice the title.*
1. *Find the sentences in the poem*. (They will not end at the ends of the lines.) rad them one at a time as sentences. Notice any that are questions.
2. *Underline the subject, verb, and object/complement* of each sentence. They may not come in "natural" order. so turn them around first.
3. *Locate the prepositions*. Put a check mark over them and bracket the prepositional phrases.
4. *Notice the "turning" words* ('but,' 'so,' 'yet'…) or the "turns" if no word is used to mark them. Mark an asterisk beside these.
5. *Look up words that you do not know*, keeping consciousness of both denotative and connotative meanings. Write a synonym above the word in the poem.
6. *Observe the shape of the poem*; the breaks between lines, the length of lines, the presence or absence of rhyme. Think about how these aspects help you notice the "sense" and the "turns."
7. *Think about who is speaking this poem*. Is it spoken *to* someone in particular? (Check the title again.) Make some notes about your ideas.
8. *Look for words that may be used figuratively* (first similes, then metaphors). Circle them.
9. *Consider possible symbols*—things that might represent something more than just themselves. Make notes about your ideas.
10. *Explore for allusions*—things that refer to something outside the poem. Look them up if you need to. Take notes.

READ THE POEM AGAIN. It helps to read id aloud, but that is not allowed on the exam.
Now: Try to complete this sentence:

The poem, "___*(title)*__" by __*(poet)*__ is about ___*(topic)*___, and it says **that** ___*(theme)*___.

Mikhail Lermontov
"The Sail" (1832)

A lone white sail shows for an instant
Where gleams the sea, an azure streak.
What left it in its homeland distant?
In alien parts what does it seek?
The billow play, the mast bends creaking,
The wind, impatient, moans and sighs…

It is not joy that it is seeking.
Nor is it happiness it flies.
The blue waves dance, they dance and tremble,
The sun's bright rays caress the seas.
And yet for storm it begs, the revel,
As if in storm lurked clam and peace!

from Dixie Dellinger, 1985

Team Poetry Lessons
Some Guidelines

Topics:

Three teams will be assigned a poet: either Dickinson, Frost, or Hughes.

Four teams will be assigned a theme: either love and longing, teaching and learning, humor and satire, or 'Border Crossings.'

Poems:

Use the poems in The Bedford Introduction to Literature, 8th ed.

You may add one additional poem if you feel it necessary.

Secondary Sources:

Print:

- Use the critical material in the literature anthology.

Electronic:

- Begin with the widest group of Internet sites you can locate but at least ten, exclusive of encyclopedias and other general sites.
- From that group, select the three most helpful.

Presentation:

- Your team will give a short lesson on your poet. You will probably want to focus on two of the poems. You want the point of the lesson to be something more valuable than, say, Dickinson is swell. Find a focus. You will have 20-30 minutes, inclusive of any class discussion or questions you choose to include. Your grade will be penalized for every minute you go beyond 30.
- You are to include some sort of a visual aid along the way. It could be projected, drawn on the board, held up. posted…. you decide what will be most effective.

Written work:

- You will submit a lesson summary of about one side of one page.
- You will turn in as well a tidy list of the web sites your team found. Include the title and the URL for each.
- You will write an "AP-type" essay question that prompts writers to identify one or more techniques or devices your poet uses and to explain how the poet uses them to convey an element such as theme, character, tone, point of view, idea, setting, mood, or the like.
- The written work may be handwritten, printed, or submitted electronically.

PROSODY

THE FOOT

The foot is measured according to the number of its stressed and unstressed syllables. The stressed syllables are marked with an acute accent (’) or a prime mark (') and the unstressed syllables with a small superscript line (¯), a small “x,” a superscript degree symbol (°) or a short accent mark, or “breve” (˘). A virgule (/) can be used to separate feet in a line.

Iamb	iambic	(- ’)	to-DÁY
Trochee	trochaic	(’ -)	BRÓ-ther
Anapest	anapestic	(- - ’)	in-ter-CÉDE
Dactyl	dactyllic	(’ - -)	YÉS-ter-day
Spondee	spondaic	(’ ’)	ÓH, NÓ
Pyrric	pyrric	(- -)	...of a...
(Amphibrach)	(amphibrachic)	(- ’ -)	chi-CÁ-go
(Bacchus)	(bacchic)	(- ’ ’)	a BRÁND NÉW car
(Amphímacer)	(amphímacratic ?)	(’ - ’)	LÓVE is BÉST

METRICAL FEET

One	**Monómeter**	“Thus I”
Two	**Dímeter**	“Rich the treasure”
Three	**Trímeter**	“A sword, a horse, a shield”
Four	**Tetrámeter**	“And in his anger now he rides”
Five	**Pentámeter**	“Draw forth thy sword, thou mighty man-at-arms”
Six	**Hexámeter**	“His foes have slain themselves, with whom he should contend.”
Seven	**Heptámeter**	“There's not a joy the world can give like that it takes away.”
Eight	**Octámeter**	“When I sit down to reason, think to take my stand nor swerve,”
Nine	**Nonámeter**	“Roman Virgil, thou that sing'st Ilion's lofty temples robed with fire,”

SPECIAL NAMES

Heroic meter	Iambic pentameter
Long meter	Iambic tetrameter
Alexandrine	One line of iambic hexameter

SCANSION

To SCAN a line is to divide it into its several feet, then to tell **what kind of feet** make up the line and **how many** of them there are, as in the descriptive names of Shakespeare and Chaucer's

	***iambic pentameter*.**

STANZAIC FORMS

Name	*Lines*	*Special rhymes / forms*
Couplet	2	rhymes: aa (2 heroic lines = *heroic couplet*)
Tercet	3	rhymes: aaa, aab, abb (*Terza rima* = aba bcb cdc, etc.)
Quatrain	4	(*In Memoriam Stanza* = abba in iambic tetrameter)
Quintain	5	(*Limerick* rhymes: aabba)
Sestet	6	—
Seven-line	7	(*Rime Royale* = ababbcc in iambic pentameter)
Octet	8	(*Ottava Rima* = abababcc in iambic pentameter)
Nine-line	9	(*Spencerian Stanza* = ababbcbcc in iambic pentameter; the final line is an Alexandrine)

Some fixed poetic forms

THE SONNET	The sonnet consists of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter (in Romance languages, iambic hexameter) The English (Shakespearean) Sonnet is made up of three quatrains and a heroic couplet and rhymes abab cdcd efef gg The Italian (Petrarchan) Sonnet is made up of an octet and a sestet. It rhymes: abbaabba cdecde; in sonnets written in English, the last six rhymes may come in any order.
THE SESTINA	The sestina dates from the 12th century. Its 39 lines divide into six sestets and a three-line envoy. The same words that end the lines in the first sestet will end the lines in all the others in a different but prescribed order. Each stanza uses these ending words from the previous stanza in the order 6-1-5-2-4-3. All six words appear in the envoy, three of them at the end of a line.
THE VILLANELLE	The villanelle, a complex and rare form, is made up of 19 lines arranged in five tercets and a concluding quatrain. Line 1 must be repeated as lines 6, 12, and 18; line 3 must be repeated as lines 9, 15, and 19.
THE BALLAD	The ballad is made up of quatrains in which the second and fourth lines must rhyme and are generally trimetric; the first and third lines are normally tetrametric.
TWO JAPANESE FORMS	Syllables are counted instead of feet. The haiku is a three-line poem in which the first and third lines have five, the second, seven. The tanka is a five line poem in which the first and third lines have five, the other three, seven each. The haiku must contain a reference to a season.

Prosody Practice

Putting them together:

Give the kind of foot, then the number of feet, using the conventional terminology.
For numbers 13-15, create (or recall) an example of the meter given.

line	*name*
1. The night is chill; the forest bare	
2. Sent them spinning down the gutter	
3. I will not eat them with a goat, I will not eat them on a boat I do not like green eggs and ham I do not like them, Sam-I-Am.	
4. In the glare of a scoreboard's last light	
5. You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?	
6. Romeo Montague, Juliet Capulet	
7. With torn and bleeding hearts we smile	
8. We wear the mask.	
9. Where lasting friendship seeds are sewn	
10. And those Power Puff Girls are in trouble again	
11. Because I could not stop for Death He kindly stopped for me The carriage held but just ourselves And Immortality. *(Emily Dickinson)*	
12. If we shadows have offended Think but this, and all is mended… *(Shakespeare)*	
13.	
14.	
15.	

Adrienne Rich

Storm Warnings

The glass has been falling all the afternoon,
And knowing better than the instrument
What winds are walking overhead, what zone
Of gray unrest is moving across the land,
I leave the book upon a pillowed chair
And walk from window to closed window, watching
Boughs strain against the sky

And think again, as often when the air
Moves inward toward a silent core of waiting,
How with a single purpose time has traveled
By secret currents of the undiscerned
Into this polar realm. Weather abroad
And weather in the heart alike come on
Regardless of prediction.

Between foreseeing and averting change
Lies all the mastery of elements
Which clocks and weatherglasses cannot alter.
Time in the hand is not control of time,
Nor shattered fragments of an instrument
A proof against the wind; the wind will rise,
We can only close the shutters.

I draw the curtains as the sky goes black
And set a match to candles sheathed in glass
Against the keyhole draught, the insistent whine
Of weather through the unsealed aperture.
This is our sole defense against the season;
These are the things that we have learned to do
Who live in troubled regions.