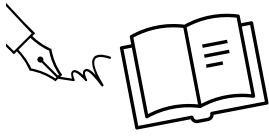


How to Respond to a Poem



Use this guide sheet to help you develop your own individual response to any poem.

What is the poem about?

- ⇒ What is the title? How/why is this significant?
- ⇒ What happens in the poem?
- ⇒ What is it about? Is this literal or is this a metaphor for something else?
- ⇒ What is the story of the poem?
- ⇒ Who is the poem about?
- ⇒ What has influenced the poet?
- ⇒ Where is it set?
- ⇒ What is the tone/mood? Does this change? How/why?
- ⇒ What emotions or feelings are conveyed in the poem? How? Why?
- ⇒ How does the context help you to further understand and interpret the poem?



What are the themes?

- ⇒ What are the different ideas expressed in the poem?
- ⇒ Think about how the themes link to what the poem is about and what the poet is trying to show you.
- ⇒ What are the main issues being explored?



What is the message?

- ⇒ What does the poet want you to understand?
- ⇒ Why did they write the poem?
- ⇒ What are their concerns/ideas?
- ⇒ Is there a moral/religious/philosophical lesson?
- ⇒ Is this a universal message? A personal message? A societal message?
- ⇒ Why does the poet want to leave you with this message?
- ⇒ Can you use your contextual knowledge to develop your interpretation of the meaning/message?



Whose perspective are you given?

- ⇒ Whose voice do we hear; who is the speaker? How do you know?
- ⇒ What situation are they in?
- ⇒ What is their significance to the story being told?
- ⇒ Why does the poet choose this voice?
- ⇒ What do we learn about the persona created?
- ⇒ What is their attitude?
- ⇒ How do we learn this?
- ⇒ How do they feel? How is this conveyed?
- ⇒ Are there any other characters in the poem? What is their role?



What is the form?

- ⇒ What type of poem is it? Why has this particular form been chosen? How does it suit/reflect/compliment what the poem is about?
- ⇒ To what extent is it adhered to or subverted? What is the effect?
- ⇒ How does it look on the page? What is the effect?
- ⇒ What can you say about stanzas and line length?
- ⇒ What is the tense?
- ⇒ What person is it written in?
- ⇒ Is there a rhyme scheme?
- ⇒ Is there a rhythm? How is it created? Why?
- ⇒ What can you say about the meter? What is the effect on the way in which you are forced to read the poem?



Poetic Devices

- ⇒ Identify the different devices used.
- ⇒ Why have they been used? What is the effect?
- ⇒ How do they reinforce the message/meaning?
- ⇒ How do they help to create a tone/mood?
- ⇒ How can you interpret meaning?
- ⇒ What do these devices reveal about character/action/events/setting/relationships?
- ⇒ How do the devices reflect the themes?



Structure

- ⇒ What can you say about the structure of the poem?
- ⇒ Is the poem organised in stages?
- ⇒ Can you summarise what happens in each stage of the poem? Or can you track the story?
- ⇒ How do ideas progress throughout the stanzas?
- ⇒ How are ideas organised?
- ⇒ Does the tone change or is it consistent?
- ⇒ Does the setting change?
- ⇒ Is there a shift in the direction of the poem? At what point?
- ⇒ How does the poem begin and end?



Top tip:

Always ask yourself **WHY & HOW**. **Why** has this technique been used? **How** has it been used? Why has this particular form been used?

Link everything back to what the poem is about; the themes; the message; and context if relevant.

