

ANALYZING A POEM***Personal and cultural codes**

- What is your initial response to the poem?
- What is happening in the poem? How do you know?
- What is the narrator like? What is he or she feeling?
- When was the poem written? What is the historical context?
- Does the poem reference a private or public realm, or both?
- Are there techniques and traits unique to the writer?
- Are there relevant biographical details?

Structural Analysis

- Does the poem have a narrative?
- Is there a poetic form? How is the poem structured (in stanzas, etc.)?
- What is significant about the lines and line breaks?
- Is there a meter, and is it variable? What is the rhythm like (stresses)?
- Is there any repetition in the poem? Does it constitute a theme? What is its significance?

Linguistic Analysis

- Are there any particularly striking images or lines that stand out for you?
- Are there similes, metaphors, metonymy? (What is the nature of the comparison?)
- Is there any personification?
- What are the verbs telling you about the kind of action in the poem?
- What is the tone of the poem?
- What interesting connotations might there be?

Synthesis

- What happens if you read the subject matter in the poem as an extended metaphor?
- What is the relationship between physical reality and metaphorical reality in the poem?
- What happens when you add up the different kinds of analysis—personal, cultural, linguistic and structural? Are their consistencies?
- Write a few sentences summarizing the “overall” meaning of the poem.

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