

S Structure and Sound

M Meaning

I Imagery

L Language

E Effect

S Structure and Sound –

The structure refers to the physical and syntactical/grammatical composition of the poem. For this element, consider the following for poetry analysis:

- number of **verses/stanzas**
- comparative length of verses/stanzas (regular or irregular); suddenly shorter stanzas
- **line length; longest line**
- **rhyme scheme**
- repetition, including **refrains, alliteration, assonance**
- **enjambment**
- sentence structure/**syntax** (remember **inverted thought** and brief **injunctions**)
- punctuation or lack thereof

M Meaning –

The meaning of the poem will become more clear as you examine all the aspects of S.M.I.L.L.E. When reading for meaning, consider the following:

- On your **first** read, consider the **LITERAL** meaning/**PHYSICAL TRAJECTORY** of the poem. What is being described? Notice details. Where is the poem going? Place ALL locations on a timeline. Remember to trace the trajectory up and down on the vertical axis and also back and forth on the horizontal axis. Also remember to trace it along temporal lines (seasons? diurnal/nocturnal cycle? lifespan?) Try to draw the physical trajectory as a shape. (Is it a parabola, a peak, a series of circles, a descent or vortex, a rising of some kind?)
- Read for parts. Look for how parts relate and make the whole. Look for shifts. Remember **volta**.
- Do any words and/or phrases seem significant?
- On your **second** read, consider the **FIGURATIVE** meaning/**EMOTIONAL TRAJECTORY** of the poem.
- What can you infer about the greater meaning of the poem based on the words and phrases you identified?
- Also consider **THEMES** and **CONTEXTS** and **CRITICAL APPROACHES/LENSES**.

I Imagery –

Imagery is language that appeals to the five or six physical senses and draws you through your

re-imagining of the speaker's sensory details of their experience and/or feelings into the deeper significance of the physical and emotional complexity of the poem.

- Consider **the overall feeling the images** and/or other senses and sensory details give you.

L Language –

Language refers to a writer's **diction**, or word choice. Note use of **figurative language** and connect it to a **thematic interpretation**, doing the same for **sound devices**, **repetition**, the **speaker's dialect** and particularly significant words. You may find the questions below useful when analyzing poetic language.

- Does the poem contain **metaphor**, **simile**, **personification**, **hyperbole** or other **figurative language**?
- **CLUSTER** **imagery** by sense, **symbol** and **diction** and connect to a **thematic meaning**.
- Does the poem contain **ambiguous** words?
- Remember **connotation**, or the associations and feeling evoked by a particular word.
- Does the poem play with sound using **alliteration**, **assonance**, **repetition**, or **rhyme**?
- Are there any words that are particularly sophisticated or especially basic? Does the rhyme, for example, depend on words like “hog” and “dog” or “absolution and “circumlocution?”
- Does the poem contain **formal or informal dialect**? Does the **speaker** seem to come from a particular region, country, or cultural background?
- When you come across a word and/or phrase that strikes you as important, ask yourself the following questions:
 - What other words or ideas come to mind when I hear this word?
 - What is a synonym for this word, and how does the meaning of the poem change if that word is used instead?
 - What meaning does the choice of this particular word add to my understanding?

E Effect –

Effect refers to the poem's ultimate, deeper, thematic messages or universal truths.

- Re-consider **THEMES** and **CONTEXTS** and **CRITICAL APPROACHES/LENSES**.
- What does the poem make you think/feel about?
- Poet's **universal message(s)**?
- What is the **speaker's tone** (attitude toward the subject) throughout the poem?
- Does the **tone** shift and how?