**How to Analyze Poetry**

An Easy Way To Begin

Poetry is the dramatization of experience in metrical language. To study or analyze poetry, one must consider many elements. A good way to start is by reading the poem silently. Then read the poem a second (third, fourth) time aloud. Reading the poem aloud makes its meaning clearer and you will hear the various poetic sound devices such as alliteration, rhyme, rhythm, etc. Then try writing down a brief summary to make sure that you are understanding the poem. Remember to read sentence by sentence not line by line.

Questions To Answer Before Writing

1. Who is speaking? 10. End rhyme scheme?

2. To whom? 11. Alliteration?

3. About? 12. Assonance?

4. Tone? 13. Consonance?

5. Examples of abstract imagery? 14. Caesura?

6. Examples of concrete imagery? 15. Enjambment? \*)

7. Examples of denotative language? 16. Theme?

8. Examples of the 5 figurative devices? 17. Rhythm / Meter?

9. Examples of rhetorical devices? 18. Syntax?

\*) the breaking of a syntactic unit (a phrase, clause, or sentence) by the end of a line or between two verses

Writing Your Paper

The actual writing of the paper is probably the easiest task because you have already identified everything that needs to be covered. You may wish to cover all the important items in your own order, however, the order listed above does work well.

Most likely you will not be able to simply write a few lines for each device, rather you must group these devices together. A proper order of paragraphs may flow like this:

I. Dramatic Situation

A. Who is speaking?

B. To whom is that speaker speaking?

C. What is the situation?

D. What is the speaker's tone?

II. Imagery

III. Theme

IV. Diction (word choice)

A. Connotation (suggested meaning of words)

B. Denotation (dictionary definition)

C. Abstract (can only be understood intellectually)

D. Concrete (words describing physical objects)

E. Kinds of language

1. Figurative

a. Metaphor (implied comparisons)

b. Simile (comparison using 'like' or 'as')

c. Personification (giving human characteristics to an inanimate object)

d. Metonymy (the use of an attribute or quality of an

object to represent the object itself)

e. Synecdoche (substitutes a significant part of

something for the thing itself)

2. Rhetorical

a. Irony (opposite of what is meant)

b. Hyperbole (exaggeration)

c. Allusion (reference to something)

d. Pun (play on words)

e. Paradox (contradictory)

f. Oxymoron (self contradictory term)

g. Litotes (form of understatement)

V. Syntax (sentence structure)

A. Length

B. Transposed elements

C. "Unusual" sentences

VI. Conclusion

Remember, when you are writing this paper you should use direct quotes wherever you can, you should vary your sentence structure, and all rules of grammar still apply.