

- 1.) **Copy of the poem** - etyped in a different font from the original. You may creative with it. Must be legible. Title & Poem. *I want you to spend time with the poem and think about the words since you are not memorizing this one.* (do not just print out a copy)
- 2.) **Author Information:** 1.) Picture of author 2.) Biography of the author. Give information about some of his/her most famous poems and/or literary works. Give specific details about life or how he/she became a writer.
- 3.) **Art/Pictures:** These may be drawn or carefully selected from online or a blend of both. Poetry is a creative process. How are you inspired by the poem? Show it.
- 4.) **Poem Analysis-** What is the poem about? (Go stanza by stanza or overall story summary.) Why did the author choose to write about the topic? (if applicable).

[This may help you a bit... <https://www.enotes.com/topics/how-analyze-poem>]

- a. **Approach** the poem and realize it can have different meanings for different readers.
- b. **Read through at least twice.** You will have to read a poem multiple times before even attempting to approach it for deeper meanings. Give yourself a chance to be thorough and fully experience the poem.
- c. **Is there a title?** Don't forget to take this into consideration. Readers often skip over a poem's title, which may contain important clues for understanding the piece. Often the title is an introduction that can guide you; for example, Langston Hughes' "Mother to Son" immediately lets you know who the speaker of the poem is and to whom she is speaking.
- d. **Stay calm!** If there are any unfamiliar words or even a few foreign terms, don't panic and don't obsess. On your first read through, just let them go and try instead to focus on the larger meaning of the poem. On the second and subsequent passes, you should then look up those troublesome words or anything else that is problematic for you.
- e. **Read it aloud.** Yes. You must do this. Poems are meant to be heard. Often you will find that places in the poem that gave you trouble on the page suddenly make sense when read out loud. You may feel silly at first, but soon you'll be comfortable. (Cats and dogs, by the way, make particularly good audiences...though cats tend to be more critical and may leave at a pivotal point in your performance.) Read in your normal voice. Don't try to sound like Maya Angelou. Unless you are Maya Angelou.
- f. **Pay attention to punctuation.** Most poems use punctuation to help guide the voice of its reader. You need to pay attention because the end of a line is frequently not the end of a sentence. Consider these lines from Robert Frost's "Birches":

When I see birches bend to left and right
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
I like to think some boy's been swinging in them.

- g. If you stop reading or pause at the end of the first line, it will sound broken and unnatural. If you read smoothly through, pausing briefly at the comma and making a full stop at the period, the poem will have its proper conversational tone.
- h. **Try paraphrasing.** It may be best for you to write in your own words what the poet is saying in each line of the poem. As you work through it, you'll see which areas you need to concentrate on. But again, avoid the notion that there is "one true meaning."
- i. **Who is the speaker?** Remember not to confuse the poet with the "speaker" of the poem. More often than not, the speaker is a character, just like in a novel or a play. Determining who the speaker is will help you approach the work more easily.
- j. **Be open to interpretation.** Give it a chance. Being open to the poet's intentions can lead you to some interesting ideas and questions.
- k. **There are no useless words.** Poets select each and every word carefully. None should be dismissed. Images and symbols all have a purpose in the overall meaning of the poem.
- l. **Don't expect a definitive reading.** Many poems are intentionally open-ended and refuse to resolve their internal tensions. While it is desirable to understand what a poem is saying, remember that there are approaches and interpretations other than your own.