

How does one evaluate poetry?

These points are meant to be guidelines for understanding. I raided several websites after googling "how to evaluate poetry" and came up with some ideas I thought would be helpful.

Same as any type of art: **what you feel when you experience it.**

Poetry can be distinguished from prose in three ways:

1. **poetry is usually brief.** Its language is more compact and condensed than the language of prose.
2. **poetry is usually more emotionally intense than prose.** Poets use figurative language, such as similes and metaphors, to paint word pictures.
3. **poetry often follows some sort of pattern.** That pattern may direct the structure of the entire poem, such as is used in haiku poetry. Free verse may not appear to follow a clear pattern, but it still has its own internal logic.:

Rhythm and Meter: Think of this as how the syllables in the poem flow.

Allegory / Allusion: Allusion = referencing something. Allegory = telling a story or having a symbol that means more than the literal meaning--think of it as a long metaphor.

Ambiguous / Subjective meaning: there are so many ways to read

STEP 1: DRAMATIC SITUATION. Start with seeing if there's a dramatic situation you can figure out. Who's the speaker? Who are they talking to? What do they seem concerned about?

STEP 2: RULES OF NOTICE. According to the literary theorist Peter Rabinowitz, there are certain "rules of notice" that operate in literary forms -- certain rules about "what's important." These rules tend to be shared between writers and readers -- so that the writers rely on readers to notice important things.

In most poems, the poet expects you to take special note of ...

- (1) titles,
- (2) first and last lines,
- (3) similes and metaphors,
- (4) other unusual or surprising uses of language,
- (5) allusions (references to a world "outside the poem")
- (6) general statements about life ("philosophical bits")
- (7) contradictions
- (8) hard to understand bits

(9) repeated words or phrases

STEP 3: RULES OF COHERENCE. Rabinowitz also describes a "rule of coherence." Readers generally expect a work of literature to have some level of coherence. In other words, you look for an interpretation that will account for most of the details in the poem.

And a high school teacher shall lead us:

- Look for lines in the poem that you feel create strong sensory descriptions.
- Which line/section did you find the MOST confusing?
- What is your FAVORITE line/section or description in the poem and why?
- What word do you think describes the tone of the poem? **Tone** tells us how the author thinks about his or her subject. The author's style conveys the tone in literature.
- What word do you think describes the mood of the poem? **Mood** is the effect of the writer's words on the reader. Mood is how the writer's words make us feel.
- Evaluate the poem's theme by asking what message is the poet trying to send or help you understand? Does it relate to your life in any way?
- Opinion of the poem:
- Evidence from the poem that supports your opinion: