

# POETRY ANALYSIS

Poetry analysis is examining the independent elements of a poem to understand the literary work in its entirety. Analyzing poems line by line allows you to break poems down in order to study their structure, form, language, metrical pattern, and theme. The purpose of literary analysis is to interpret the meaning of a poem and evaluate it on a deeper level.

**How to analyze a poem? The following are the necessary elements that should be found in poetry analysis:**

1. **Theme:** Poetry often conveys a message through figurative language. The central idea and the subject matter can reveal the underlying theme of a poem.
2. **Language:** From word choice to imagery, language creates the mood and tone of a poem. The way language is arranged also impacts the rhythm of a poem.
3. **Sound and rhythm:** The syllabic patterns and stresses create the metrical pattern of a poem.
4. **Structure:** The framework of a poem's structure affects how it is meant to be read. A poet sculpts their story around stanzas, line breaks, rhyme patterns, punctuation, and pauses.
5. **Context:** The who, what, where, when, and why of a poem can help explain its purpose. Look at these elements to discover the context of a poem.

**To analyze a poem, you have to follow the coming steps**

1. **Read the poem:** The first time you approach a poem, read it to yourself. Go through it slowly, appreciating the nuances and details you might miss when reading it quickly. Examine the title of the poem and how it relates to the meaning of the piece.
2. **Read the poem again, this time aloud:** Given its rhythmic patterns, poetry is designed to be read aloud. As you read a poem aloud, listen to how the words and syllables shape the rhythm. It can also help to hear someone else read the poem. Try to find an audio recording of the poem, if you can. Listen to how the words flow from line to line, where the breaks are, and where the stress is placed.
3. **Break down the structure and determine the form of the poem:** Take a step back and look at the poem on the page. Notice the white space around the words. Poetry is meant to make a visual statement as well as an emotional one. Look at the details of this structure—like how many lines are in each stanza. Notice where the line breaks are. Does the end of every line coincide with the end of the thought? If not, the poet may be using enjambment (run-on line), where one line continues into the next. Moreover, in your poem analysis, identify the type and genre of poem you're reading based on the elements you've examined.
4. **Study the content of the poem:** As you wade through the language of the poem, look at the content and message of the piece to uncover the themes. Learn when it was written to learn the historical context of the poem. Find out where it was written, and what language the poet used. If you're reading a translation, see if there are other variations that can show how different translators interpreted the original work.
5. **Study the language in the poem:** Poets make deliberate word choices to craft their poems. Examine each word and its significance in the line and the poem. How does it contribute to the story? If there are words you don't know, look them up. See how the poet plays with language through the use of alliteration, assonance, metaphors, similes, and figurative language. Note any literary devices used to sculpt the poem's language.

6. **Map out the rhyme scheme:** You'll notice right away if a poem has a rhyme scheme or is written in free verse (i.e. without a rhyme scheme or regular meter). Map out the rhyming pattern by assigning each line a letter, giving lines that rhyme the same letter. See if there is a distinct pattern and a formal rhyme scheme, like terza rima (three-line stanzas with interconnected scheme of ABA BCB, etc.)

7. **Scan the poem:** Scansion is how you analyze the meter of poetry based on the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in each line. Mark each foot—the basic measurement of a poetic line consisting of one stressed syllable paired with at least one unstressed syllable. Next, mark the pattern of stresses throughout the line. Identify the meter based on this information. For example, a poem written in iambic pentameter will have five feet with a syllabic pattern of da DUM, da DUM, da DUM, da DUM, da DUM.

8. **Determine who the poetic voice is:** Try to identify the speaker of the poem. Is it told through first-person point of view, second-person, or third-person? What tone does the narrator convey? The speaker's identity influences the telling of the poem based on their personal perspective.

9. **Paraphrase the poem line by line.** Finally, go through the poem again. Beginning with the first line, paraphrase each line. In other words, interpret the meaning, writing down your summary as you go. Once you've gone through the entire piece, read your words to grasp the meaning of the poem.

10. Checking the **biography** of the poet is highly important to understand the writer's motives behind his choice of themes, language and form; and to comprehend the depiction of the cultural, social, political and religious factors of his background on his writings.

**Read the following poem and try to analyze it according the above mentioned steps:**

### *Ode to a Nightingale by John Keats*

<p>My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains          My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,          Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains          One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:          'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,          But being too happy in thine happiness,—          That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees          In some melodious plot          Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,          Singest of summer in full-throated ease.</p>	<p>O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been          Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,          Tasting of Flora and the country green,          Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!          O for a beaker full of the warm South,          Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,          With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,          And purple-stained mouth;          That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,          And with thee fade away into the forest dim:</p>
<p>Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget          What thou among the leaves hast never known,          The weariness, the fever, and the fret          Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;          Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,          Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;          Where but to think is to be full of sorrow          And leaden-eyed despairs,          Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,          Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.</p>	<p>Away! away! for I will fly to thee,          Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,          But on the viewless wings of Poesy,          Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:          Already with thee! tender is the night,          And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,          Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;          But here there is no light,          Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown          Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.</p>