

# Using TPCASTT for Analysis of Poetry

T	Title	What do the words of the title suggest to you? What denotations are presented in the title? What connotations or associations do the words possess?		
P	Paraphrase	Translate the poem in your own words. What is the poem about?		
C	Connotation	What meaning does the poem have beyond the literal meaning? Fill in the chart below.		
		Form	Diction	Imagery
		Point of View	Details	Allusions
		Symbolism	Figurative Language	Other Devices (antithesis, apostrophe, sound devices, irony, oxymoron, paradox, pun, sarcasm, understatement)
A	Attitude	What is the speaker's attitude? How does the speaker feel about himself, about others, and about the subject? What is the author's attitude? How does the author feel about the speaker, about other characters, about the subject, and the reader?		
S	Shifts	Where do the shifts in tone, setting, voice, etc. occur? Look for time and place, keywords, punctuation, stanza divisions, changes in length or rhyme, and sentence structure. What is the purpose of each shift? How do they contribute to effect and meaning?		
T	Title	Reanalyze the title on an interpretive level. What part does the title play in the overall interpretation of the poem?		
T	Theme	List the subjects and the abstract ideas in the poem. Then determine the overall theme. What message is the author trying to convey? What lesson is being taught? The theme must be written in a complete sentence.		

## D.U.C.A.T.S. The “6 gold pieces” of writer’s voice

**Diction** refers to a writer’s (or speaker’s) word choice with the following considerations:

- denotation / connotation
- degree of difficulty or complexity of a word
- monosyllabic / polysyllabic
- abstract / concret
- euphonius / cacophonous
- colloquial / formal / informal / technical
- tone of a word (the emotional charge a word carries)
- the *above* will often create a subtext for the text

**Unity** refers to the idea that all of the ideas in a written piece are relevant and appropriate to the focus. Some considerations:

- each claim (assertion, topic sentence) supports the thesis
- each piece of evidence is important and relevant to the focus of the paragraph or the piece of writing as a whole
- occasionally, a writer may choose to purposely violate the element of unity for a specific effect (some humorists / satirists will sometimes consciously do this)
- it is important to consider what has been omitted from a piece and examine the writer’s intent in doing so

**Coherence** refers to the organization and logic of a piece of writing; some considerations include:

- precision and clarity in a thesis and supportive arguments
- the arguments ordered in the most effective way for the writer’s intent
- the sentences and paragraphs “flow smoothly” for the reader; there should not be any abrupt leaps or gaps in the presentation of the ideas or story (unless the writer makes a conscious choice for a specific and appropriate effect)

**Audience** refers to the writer’s awareness of who will be reading his or her piece of writing; some considerations are:

- Who are the targeted readers?
- How well informed are they on the subject? What does the writer want the reader to learn as a result of this piece?
- What first impression is created for the reader and how does the author’s voice shape this first impression?
- How interested and attentive are they likely to be? Will they resist any of the ideas?
- What is the relationship between the writer and the reader? Employee to supervisor? Citizen to citizen? Expert to novice? Scholar to scholar? Student to teacher? Student to student?
- How much time will the reader be willing to spend reading?
- How sophisticated are the readers in regard to vocabulary and syntax?

**Tone** refers to a writer’s ability to create an attitude toward the subject matter of a piece of writing. What does that attitude suggest about the author? The subject? What effect is produced by the writing and how is that effect produced?

The tools a writer uses to create tone:

- Diction, Figurative language, Characterization, Plot, Theme, Structure

**Syntax** refers to the arrangement--the ordering, grouping, and placement--of words within a phrase, clause, or sentence.

Some considerations:

- Type of sentence
- Length of sentence
- Subtle shifts or abrupt changes in sentence length or patterns
- Punctuation use
- Use of repetition
- Language patterns / rhythm / cadence
- How all of the above factors contribute to narrative pace
- The use of active and/or passive voice

# S.O.A.P.S. Tone – Analyzing point of view

**Speaker:** Is there someone identified as the speaker? Can you make some assumptions about this person? What class does the author come from? What political bias can be inferred? What gender?

**Occasion:** What may have prompted the author to write this piece? What event led to its publication or development?

**Audience:** Does the speaker identify an audience? What assumptions can you make about the audience? Is it a mixed in terms of: race, politics, gender, social class, religion, etc.? Who was the document created for? Does the speaker use language that is specific for a unique audience? Does the speaker evoke: Nation? Liberty? God? History? Hell? Does the speaker allude to any particular time in history such as: Ancient Times? Industrial Revolution? World Wars? Vietnam?

**Purpose:** What is the speaker's purpose? In what ways does the author convey this message? What seems to be the emotional state of the speaker? How is the speaker trying to spark a reaction in the audience? What words or phrases show the speaker's tone? How is this document supposed to make you feel?

**Subject:** What is the subject of the piece? How do you know this? How has the subject been selected and presented by the author?

**Tone:** What is the author's attitude toward the subject? How is the writer's attitude revealed? The tools a writer uses to create are diction, figurative language, characterization, plot, theme, structure

# D.I.D.L.S. A mnemonic for literary analysis

**Diction:** the denotative and connotative meanings of words What words does the author choose? Consider his/her word choice compared to another. Why did the author choose that particular word? What are the connotations of that word choice?

- different words for the same thing often suggest different attitudes (happy vs. content vs. ecstatic)
- denotative vs. connotative (dead vs. passed away)
- concrete vs. abstract (able to perceive with 5 senses, tangible, vs. an idea or concept that exists in one's mind, intangible)
- monosyllabic vs. polysyllabic (Cats eat meat; felines are carnivorous animals.)
- simple vs. ornate
- positive vs. negative (slender vs. skinny, determined vs. stubborn)
- colloquial / informal / formal / technical
- cacophonous vs. euphonious (e.g., harsh sounding, raucous, croak **or** pleasant sounding, languid, murmur)
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**Images:** Vivid appeals to understanding through the five senses – sight, sound, touch, taste, smell. (What images does the author use? What does he/she focus on in a sensory way? How do the kinds of images the author puts in or leaves out reflect his/her style? Are they vibrant? Prominent? Plain? (NOTE: Images differ from detail in the degree to which they appeal to the senses. A farmer and a real estate developer would use different imagery to describe the same piece of land. Imagery would differ in a romantic vs. realistic description of the countryside.)

**Details:** Facts that are included or those that are omitted. What details does the author choose to include? What do they imply? What does the author choose to exclude? What are the connotations of the choice of details? (NOTE: Details are facts or factlets. They differ from images in that they don't have a strong sensory appeal. Hard Copy vs. CNN vs. NPR)

**Language:** The overall use of language such as formal, clinical, informal, slang What is the overall impression of the language the author uses? Does it reflect education? A particular profession? Intelligence? Is it plain? Ornate? Simple? Clear? Figurative? Poetic? Make sure you don't skip this step. Ambassador will speak differently than a cop or a kid.

**Sentence Structure:** How the author's use of sentence structure affects the reader What are the sentences like? Are they simple with one or two clauses? Do they have multiple phrases? Are they choppy? Flowing? Sinuous like a snake? Is there antithesis, chiasmus, parallel construction? What emotional impression do they leave? If we are talking about poetry, what is the meter? Is there a rhyme scheme? Long flowing sentences give us a different feeling than short choppy ones. If the narrator has awkward sentence structure, we might think he is uneducated or fearful. Sophisticated mature sentences might suggest artistic creativity.

# So What?

## **S.O.L.L.I.D.D. Analyzing rhetorical elements & author's style**

**Syntax:** Sentence structure

**Organization:** The structure of sections within a passage and as a whole. Movement in the passage between tones, ideas, defining literary/rhetorical strategies

**Literary Devices:** Metaphor, simile, personification, irony (situational, verbal and dramatic), hyperbole, allusion, alliteration, etc.

**Levels of Discourse:** Cultural levels of language act, with attendant traits (does the narrator's voice represent a particular social, political, or cultural viewpoint or perspective?)

**Imagery:** Deliberate vivid appeal to the audience's understanding through the five senses (visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory)

**Diction:** Word choice and its denotative and connotative significance

**Detail:** Descriptive items selected for inclusion. Concrete aspects of the poem or passage. What is included; what is omitted

### **Ingredients**

#### **Poem:**

- Title
- Speaker/Persona/Voice
- Structure (prosody.verse, stanza, poetic form)
- Theme (direct/implied)
- Figures of Speech
- Symbolism

#### **Fiction/Novel:**

- Title
- Speaker
- Structure (plot elements, flashback, foreshadowing; fictional form)
- Theme (direct/implied)
- Character (direct/indirect; flat/round; static/dynamic; foil; stereotype)
- Setting (integral)
- Point of View (first/third; limited/omniscient; major/minor; reliable/näive; stream-of-consciousness)
- Figures of Speech
- Symbolism

#### **Drama:**

- Title
- Speaker
- Structure (plot elements, flashback, foreshadowing)
- Theme (direct/implied)
- Character (direct/indirect; flat/round; static/dynamic; foil; stereotype)
- Setting (staging, props, costumes)
- Figures of Speech
- Symbolism

#### **Essay:**

- Title
- Speaker
- Structure (thesis, introduction, evidence, conclusion; enumeration, chronological, compare/contrast. cause/effect)
- Purpose (inform, educate, persuade)
- Theme (direct/implied)
- Figures of Speech
- Rhetorical Devices
- Symbolism

# P.A.T.T.R. For Analyzing Rhetoric

**Purpose:** Identify the author's purpose in writing; i.e., to persuade, to inform, to describe, to narrate. The writer may use one or all of three strategies --

- **pathos** (emotional appeal)  
non-logical, senses, biases, prejudices, connotative language, euphemism, figurative language, friendly
- **logos** (logical appeal)  
inductive deductive, syllogisms, enthymeme claims, evidence, testimony, quotes, facts, authority
- **ethos** (ethical appeal)  
intelligence, virtue and good will; appeals to morals or prudence

**Audience:** Identify the author's intended audience, i.e., what readers would be more likely influenced and open to this writing.

**Tone:** Identify the author's attitude toward the subject and the audience, as expressed through devices like diction, imagery, details, language, and syntax. Be alert to the possibility of irony and satire.

**Theme:** Consider theme as an abstract concept coupled with an observation about life and human experience. Avoid theme statements that are too simplistic, judgmental, or moralizing, specific to the plot or characters of the particular writing, or include absolutes like *anyone, all, none, everything, everyone*.

**Rhetorical devices:** any device which persuades the audience to agree with the author

- **analogy**—making clear a concept by showing similarity to a more familiar concept
- **assertion**—suggestion for consideration as true or plausible
- **antithesis**—statement OPPOSED to another assertion
- **anticipate an objection**—addressing an objection before anyone else can raise the objection
- **concession**—an acknowledgement of objections to a proposal
- **direct address**—speaking directly to another
- **rebuttal**—final opposition to an assertion, disproving or refusing
- **red herring**—a statement that draws attention from the central issue
- **reduce to the absurd**—to show the foolishness of an argument
- **rhetorical question**—asking a question without desiring a response
- **specious reasoning**—having only apparent logic, not true logic but presented as such **under/over**
- **statement**—saying considerably more or less than a condition warrants, usually to be ironic