

# Poetry Thinking & Marking Guidelines

## To Begin

1. Read the poem once without marking or making notes of any kind. When finished reading silently, read the passage aloud to hear the rhythm and sounds that the words make.
2. Then consider the **Big Three**:
  - a. Speaker
  - b. Audience
  - c. Situation (time, place, and what happens)

## External Elements (Structure & Mechanics)

3. Note whether the structure and **organization** of the poem is “typical.” Does it fit a specific form (Sonnet, Villanelle, Haiku, Ode, etc.)?
4. Study the punctuation. Note the number of sentences and the length of each. Notice the various types of punctuation the author uses and where. Is any use of punctuation predominant, or obviously omitted or used sparingly?
5. Notice the “flow” from one stanza to another. Does the author use external rhyme (at the end of a line), slant rhyme, or other devices such as enjambment or caesura?
6. Mark any interesting or unusual capitalization, or lack thereof, used by the poet.

## Internal Elements (Literary Devices)

7. Mark any unknown words and write the definitions next to it. Pay close attention to words with multiple meanings / connotations.
8. Note the patterns of **imagery**.
9. Mark any important **symbols**
10. Mark any important allusions you find with small explanations of the allusion to the immediate side of the notation. This might require a quick dictionary or Google search.
11. Mark strong uses of **figurative language** that contribute to interpretations of the poem.
12. Using your “Literary Terms” sheets, mark any other literary devices that are important and contribute to the meaning of the poem.

## Commentary & Interpretations

13. Ask yourself what the **tone** of the poem is? What **atmosphere** does the poem create?
14. What is the **progression** of the poem?
15. What questions do you have? What questions could you ask that would help facilitate a rewarding classroom discussion?
16. What are your own interpretations? What **themes** does the poem and poet deal with? What do you think the central purpose of the poem is? To reveal human nature? To call forth a memory, mood, or emotion? To recall an experience? To convey a moral, idea or philosophy?
17. How do the Literary Devices and structure support your interpretations?

**S**ymbol  
**T**heme  
**O**rganization  
**P**rogression

**B**ig Three  
**A**tmosphere  
**D**iction

**F**igurative Language  
**I**magery  
**T**one