

**ORAL READING OF POETRY
FOR UNDERSTANDING AND ENJOYMENT**

Many of the lessons on understanding poetry focus on structure, literary devices, and theme. There is an added component that is seldom addressed and that is the music of the language.

PRE-READING PREP:

Put students in small groups of 3 people, no more than 4.

Only allow 5 – 10 minutes for students to complete the pre-reading portion of the assignment. Tasks can be divided. Students should not get bogged down with pre-reading background preparation. *This is part of what takes the joy away from the power of poetry.*

STUDENT 1 can look up pronunciation and meaning of unfamiliar words

STUDENTS 2 can brief other group members on time period, author, genre, and style

STUDENT 3 can inform students of literary devices and unusual diction and syntax.

PRE-READING BASICS: (5 MINUTES, 10 AT MOST)

BACKGROUND

- ✓ **CONTEXT:** If possible refer to the **time period, the type of language** and literary movement.
- ✓ **FORMS:** Being familiar with different **forms of poetry: sestina, sonnet, ode, ballad, villanelle, etc. the purpose of those forms** and how they function will help.

KEY CONCEPT: IN POETRY EVERY WORD COUNTS.

Before reading the poem out loud scan it for:

- ✓ **Syntax and Punctuation – unusual capitalization or lack of capitalization.** If there is unusual capitalization make note of it as you read the poem the first two times. Ask yourself - how does the unusual capitalization or syntax impact the poem's meaning?

Look for:

- ✓ **Unfamiliar words, references to mythology and Allusions.** Look those up and any words you do not know how to pronounce.

RHYTHM

- ❖ **SOUND** is not an acronym, rather it is a technique to become familiar with the poem.
- ❖ One of the main differences between poetry and prose is the **RHYTHM**. Poetry is meant to be read aloud.
- ❖ **Experience the rhythm** - the power of precise diction and figurative language that nurtures an appreciation of poetry.

ESTABLISHING RHYTHM – READ #1

- The first time **read it according to the line breaks**.
- Take a breath at the end of each line.
- This should help to establish a sense of rhythm.

READING FOR THEME AND COMPREHENSION - #2

- The second time **read it according to the punctuation**.
- Pause briefly at commas and dashes
- Take a breath at the end of sentences.

READING TO BRING THE POEM TO LIFE - #3

The third time **read it with inflection**.

How do you think the poem wants to be read to be understood?

Here are some suggestions:

- If it is a **happy poem** you might want to **increase pacing of delivery**, but not sing-songy, it detracts from the impact of the words.
- If it is a **sorrowful poem** you might want to **pause at key words and slow the pacing. Tap into the emotion the diction is indicating**.
- If it is a protest poem – find the words or **phrases that indicate conflict** and **read with the indicated emotion**.
- If there is **repetition in the poem** – play with either saying the words repeated with **a different inflection** each time you read it, or reading it differently from the way you read the rest of the poem, even if it is only **slowing or speeding up the pace**.
- **Multi-voice reading for depth and dimension:** Students can also try reading the poem with multiple voices, divvying up certain stanzas or lines. Reading a line together in unison or voice echoes on key words or phrases.

SIFT Poetry Analysis Strategy

Directions: Use the table below to record examples of each of the poetic devices from the poem. Be sure to use the exact wording.

| | |
|---|--|
| Symbol examine the title and text for symbolism | |
| Images identify imagers and sensory details | |
| Figures of Speech analyze figurative language and other devices (use the terms on the handout) | |
| Tone and Theme discuss how all devices reveal tone and theme | |