

Poetry

To comprehend a poem, the student must use the details to construct overall meaning.

Here are some helpful tips to help the student interpret the format and meaning of a poem. Understanding poetry often involves interpreting the feelings of the speaker in the poem, and analyzing figurative language. It may be helpful to review poetry commonly read by students at this grade level. Your local library can suggest some books of poetry.

Poetry is written in many different forms. Some poems rhyme, while others are non-rhyming. Poems are organized in groups of verses, or lines, called stanzas. A poem may contain multiple stanzas, or only one.

The speaker is the character narrating the poem. The poet and the speaker are not always the same person. For example, an adult might write a poem using the voice of a child.

The mood and tone describe the emotional voice of a poem. Read the following verses and pay attention to how different their moods are. Although both examples are about a boy, the mood of the first verse is more lighthearted than the mood of the second verse.

The silly boy skipped along,
And sang a happy skipping song.

The boy walked slowly down the way,
Wishing for the happiness of yesterday.

Poets use different kinds of language to set the mood or to create mental pictures in the reader's mind. Here are three definitions and examples of descriptive language.

1. Simile- a comparison between two dissimilar things, which uses the word "like" or "as"

Ex. He ran **as** fast **as** a cheetah. (He is being compared to a cheetah.)

Ex. Sandra's beauty blossomed **like** a flower. (Sandra is being compared to a flower.)

2. Metaphor- a comparison between two dissimilar things without the use of the words "like" or "as"

Ex. The burning flame of love will consume me. (Love is being compared to a flame.)

Ex. Change swept through our town leaving a wake of destruction. (Change is being compared to a strong wind or tornado.)

3. Personification- a description that gives human characteristics to nonhuman items or ideas

Ex. Staring at me, the dog dared me to come into his yard. (A dog cannot actually dare someone.)

Ex. I turned into the wind, letting it tickle my nose. (The wind cannot actually tickle someone.)

Practice:

The most direct way to help the student understand and appreciate poetry is to check out some books of poetry from the library. Have the student locate a short rhyming poem. Next, have the student copy down the poem's title, author's name, and the poem. Then, ask the student to identify words that rhyme. Using markers or colored pencils, mark rhyming pairs with the same colors. When all the rhymes have been marked, have the student read the poem to you again, paying close attention to the rhyming words. Examining the rhymes in poetry should help the student understand both the structure and underlying meaning of the poem. Next, the student can identify the speaker. Finally, have the student look for similes, metaphors, and personification within the poem. By interpreting the format and meaning of the poem, the student will better understand poetry.