

# TPCASTT Analysis Chart – Analyzing Poetry

TERMS	Explanation of the term	Questions to Ask
<b>T</b> itle	Look at the title of the poem.	Why is this the title? If there is no title, why not? What does the lack of the title suggest? What do you think the poem might be about?
<b>P</b> araphrase	Rewrite the poem in your own words, explaining what is literally being said. Do this by line or by stanza.	What is literally being said? Even if it doesn't make sense logically, what is the poet saying?
<b>C</b> onnotation	Label positive, negative, and neutral words. Keep in mind this could change throughout the poem; that's where "Shifts" come into play.	Looking at word choice. Are the words negative, positive, or neutral? How can you tell? Why are words positive, negative or neutral? This will relate to "Theme" later.
<b>A</b> ttitude	This is the speaker's attitude or feeling toward the subject in the poem.	How does the speaker feel about the subject? What does the speaker want to occur? What feelings are expressed in the poem?
<b>S</b> hifts	When connotation changes, or the rhythm of a poem changes (when there is a "shift"), this usually indicates a shift in tone or attitude.	Where do you notice shifts? What is happening in the poem at these shifts? What is the attitude shift? (It changes from ____ to ____.)
<b>T</b> itle	Look at the title again.	Were you right about what the poem would be about? Now that you've looked at the poem closely, how does the title relate?
<b>T</b> heme	This is the point or overall purpose of the poem.	What is the poem about? What is the poet trying to express about the subject? What is the point of the poem?

**T=TITLE (What is the meaning of the title?)**

Before you even think about reading the poetry or trying to analyze it, speculate on what you think the poem might be about based upon the title. Authors may conceal meaning and give clues in the title. Jot down what you think the poem will be about.

**P=PARAPHRASE (Write a brief summary of what the poem is saying. Go by line or by stanza.)**

Before you begin thinking about meaning or trying to analyze the poem, think about the literal meaning of the poem. One of the biggest problems that students often make in poetry analysis is jumping to conclusions before understanding what is taking place in the poem. When you paraphrase a poem, write in your own words exactly what happens in the poem.

**C=CONNOTATIONS (Look for deeper meanings)**

Although this term usually refers solely to the emotional overtones of word choice, for this approach the term refers to any and all poetic devices, focusing on how devices contribute to the meaning, the effect, or both of a poem. You may consider imagery, symbolism, figures of speech (simile, metaphor, personification, symbolism), diction, point of view, and sound devices (alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhythm, and rhyme). It is not necessary that you identify all the poetic devices within the poem. The ones you do identify should be seen as a way of supporting the conclusions you are going to draw about the poem.

**A=ATTITUDE (How is the speaker speaking?)****Think about tone and use adjectives to describe tone.)**

Having examined the poem's devices and clues closely, you are now ready to explore the multiple attitudes that

may be present in the poem. Examination of diction, images, and details suggests the speaker's attitude and contributes to understanding. You may refer to a list of tone words to help you. Remember that usually the tone or attitude cannot be named with a single word; think complexity.

**S=SHIFTS (How do shifts – in tone, structure, rhythm or meaning – affect the meaning?)**

Rarely does a poem begin and end the poetic experience in the same place. As is true of most of us, the poet's understanding of an experience is a gradual realization, and the poem is a reflection of that understanding or insight. Watch for the following keys to shifts: key words (*but, yet, however, although*), punctuation (dashes, periods, colons, ellipsis), stanza divisions (changes in line or stanza length or both), irony, changes in sound that may indicate changes in meaning, changes in diction.

**T=TITLE, AGAIN (Reconsider the meaning. What new understanding do you have about the title, and what does it add to your understanding of the poem?)**

Now look at the title again, but this time on an interpretive level. What new insight does the title provide in understanding the poem.

**T=THEME (Evaluate the poem's meaning. Consider literal and figurative meanings.)**

What is the poem saying about the human experience, motivation, or condition? What subject or subjects does the poem address? What do you learn about those subjects? What idea does the poet want you take away with you concerning these subjects? Remember that the theme of any work of literature is stated in a complete sentence.