Poetry Explication

Poetry explication is a detailed analysis of a poem. A classic poetry explication consists of the theme, meaning of the poem, images, rhyme, plot, conflicts, and poetic devices.

What should you include in a poetry explication?

- **Background Information:** Here you are expected to identify the poem’s title, tell who the author is, and explain where the poem can be found. You should also introduce the general theme and main subject of the poem.

- **Form:** Identify the type of poem you’re working with—is it a narrative poem, a haiku, a sonnet, free verse, or some other form you can identify? You should also indicate how the characteristics of the identified form are applicable to the poem. (Do the short lines of the haiku contribute to the simplicity of the theme? Etc.)

- **Interpretation of lines/stanzas:** Explain the meaning of the poem line by line and stanza by stanza. While explaining, you should also discuss specific elements of the poem (simile, metaphor, rhyme scheme, etc.). A list of poetic devices you might refer to here can be found on the next page.

- **Theme:** After interpreting the poem line by line, explain how those lines combine to establish the overarching theme you identified in the introduction.

- **Evaluation:** Make a judgment about the poem. To do so, ask yourself the following questions:
  - How effectively did the author convey his/her point of view?
  - How successful was the author in creating the intended mood/tone?
  - Which elements of the poem were the strongest/ weakest? Why?
  - How would you describe the potential impact of this poem on its audience?

Poetic Devices… …and examples:

- **Simile:** figures of speech that compares two unlike things, using the words *like* or *as.*
  - *Ex:* "His feet were as big as boats."

- **Alliteration:** the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words.
  - *Ex:* "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers."

- **Metaphor:** a figure of speech that compares two unlike things directly, without the use of *like* or *as.*
  - *Ex:* "Her hair is silk."

- **Personification:** assigning human qualities to non-human things.
  - *Ex:* "The tropical storm slept for two days."

- **Onomatopoeia:** words that imitate sounds.
  - *Ex:* "Boom. Gurgle. Plink."
• **Hyperbole:** an expression of exaggeration.
  o Ex: "I nearly died laughing."

• **Symbolism:** using an object to represent an idea. A symbol means what it is and also something more.
  o Ex: Lions often symbolize royalty, and snakes often symbolize evil.

• **Pun:** words with a humorous double meaning, a "play on words."
  o Ex: "A dog not only has a fur coat but also pants."

• **Idiom:** expressions that have a meaning apart from the meanings of the individual words.
  o Ex: "It's raining cats and dogs."

• **Mood:** the overall feeling the poem creates. Mood, or tone, for example, can be playful, sad, lonely, angry or joyful.

• **Foot:** the time period into which the beat of the poetic line is divided. A foot is made up of several syllables, some long and some short.

• **Meter:** refers to how the feet are put together to form lines of poetry. The combinations of long and short syllables give poetry a musical feel.

• **Rhythm:** the pattern of long and short syllables in a poetic line. In modern poetry, some words receive greater vocal emphasis than others.