

Why bother?
Isn't poetry just boring
greeting card sentimentalism?



- Steps to follow:
- 1 Show no fear.
 - 2 Read the title.
 - 3 Read the poem all the way through.
 - 4 Annotate.

How to Read a Poem

- 6 Identify the narrator.
Identify the speaker, the narrator in the poem. What is the voice behind the poem? How does the narrator relate to the message or theme of the poem?
- 7
- 8 Figure out the structure.
What is the structure of the poem? How does the structure relate to the message or theme of the poem?
- 9 Read the poem one more time, aloud if possible.



How
to Read a
POEM

Why bother?

Isn't poetry just sappy,
greeting card sentimentality?

Well, yeah, some poems are sappy.
Some are overwrought and annoying.

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Some, though, are spectacular
and can change the way
you see the world.

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A girl
or
a lake?



Image credit: Pixabay, Public domain

A girl
or
a lake?



Image credit: Pixabay, Public domain

Think about it like this:

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Poetry = Songs

Image credit:
Pixabay, Public domain

Think about it like this:

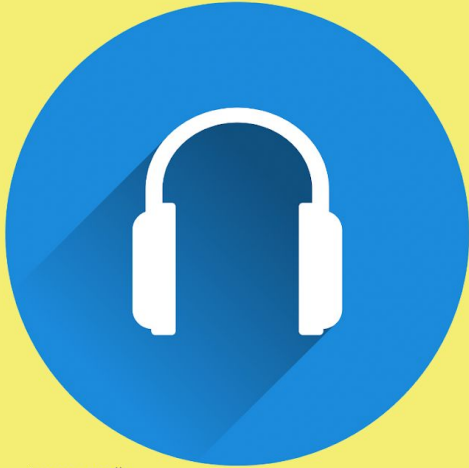


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Pixabay, Public domain

Poetry = Songs

Do you like every song you hear?
Of course not!

Will you like every poem you read?
Of course not!

But if you don't like
ANY song or ANY poem,
then you're probably
just not paying attention.

Even after all this time,
the Sun never says to the Earth, "You owe me."
Look what happens with a love like that.
It lights the whole sky.

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Some songs are tired.

Some are trite.

Some are so poorly written that
all you can do is shake your head.



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And I'm like
Baby, baby, baby ooh
Like baby, baby, baby nooo
Like baby, baby, baby ooh
I thought you'd always be mine (mine)

Baby, baby, baby ooh
Like baby, baby, baby nooo
Like baby, baby, baby ooh
I thought you'd always be mine (mine)

– Justin Bieber, "Baby"

But some songwriters are amazing.

Some songs are catchy AND meaningful.

Some make you feel like the singer
understands you as no one else does.

But some songwriters are amazing.

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understands you as no one else does.

Poetry can do
the EXACT same thing.

But there's more!

Poetry is great because it's small.



Poetry is great because it's small.

Don't have a month to read a full novel?

No problem!

In just 15 minutes or so,
you can chew on a small
nugget of awesomeness
and have a complete
literary experience.



So, let's get to it...

Steps to follow:

1

Show no fear.

2

Rea

Show no fear.



Don't be afraid of the poem. Will you understand everything the first time you read the poem? Nope.

Show no fear.



Don't be afraid of the poem. Will you understand everything the first time you read the poem? Nope.

That's part of the fun. The excitement of discovery is part of the process of understanding a poem.



2

Read the title.

2

Read the title.

Then,



2

Read the title.

Then,

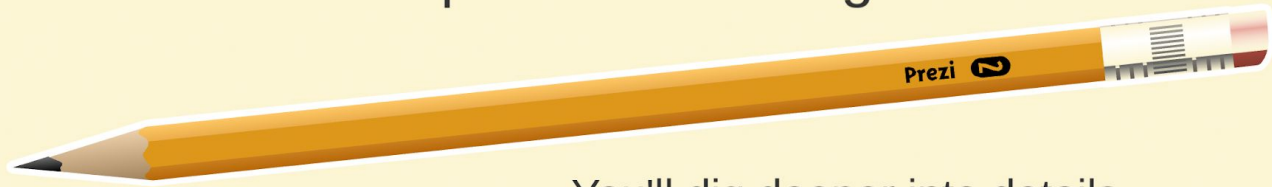


Based solely on the title, what do you think this poem will be about?
Decide this before you move forward.

3

Read the poem
all the way through.

It's okay if you don't
understand everything.
Just read to get the gist,
or general idea,
of the poem's meaning.



You'll dig deeper into details
or confusing passages later.

4

Annotate.

Read the poem again, but this time underline, highlight, or write comments in the margins next to anything that you:

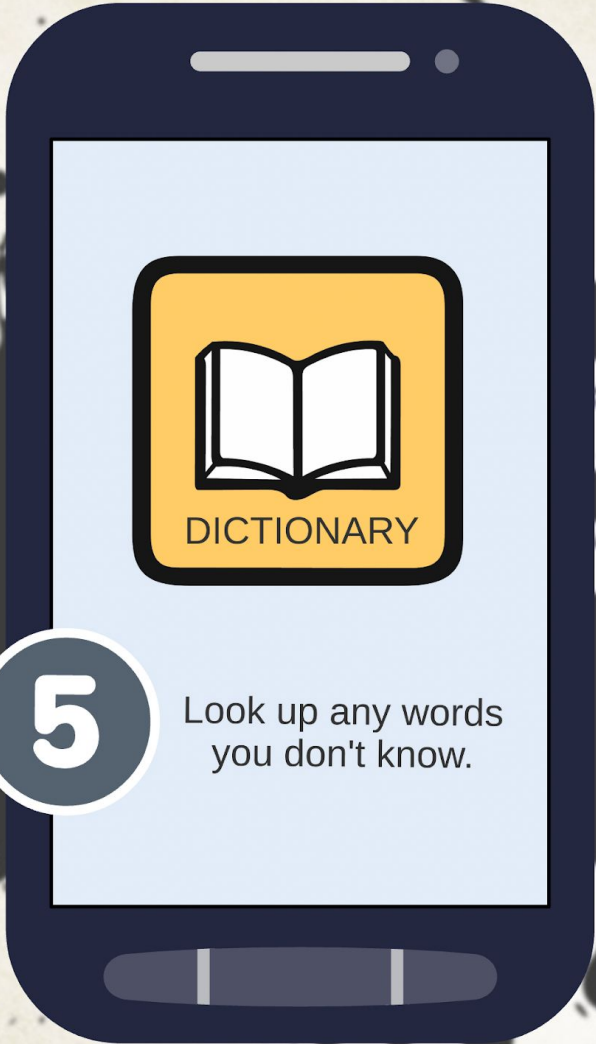
- really like
- reminds you of something else
- think is interesting
- find confusing
- suspect might be important but don't know why



Read the poem again, but this time underline, highlight, or write comments in the margins next to anything that you:

- really like
- reminds you of something else
- think is interesting
- find confusing
- suspect might be important but don't know why





5

Look up any words you don't know.

s to follow

Some songs are tried
Some are in some are writte
Some are in some are writte
all you can do is take your head



Identify the narrator.

Figure out who is speaking in the poem.

What do you know about this narrator?

What is the narrator's tone?

How does the narrator impact the message or theme of the poem?



Notice shifts or changes.

Does this mean you should...?

1. Change your mind about...

2. Change your mind about...

3. Change your mind about...

4. Change your mind about...

Notice shifts or changes.

Does the narrator use a hinge word, such as "but" or "however," to change the momentum or meaning of the poem? Pay special attention to the idea that comes immediately after one of these hinge or shift words.



Figure out the structure

structure

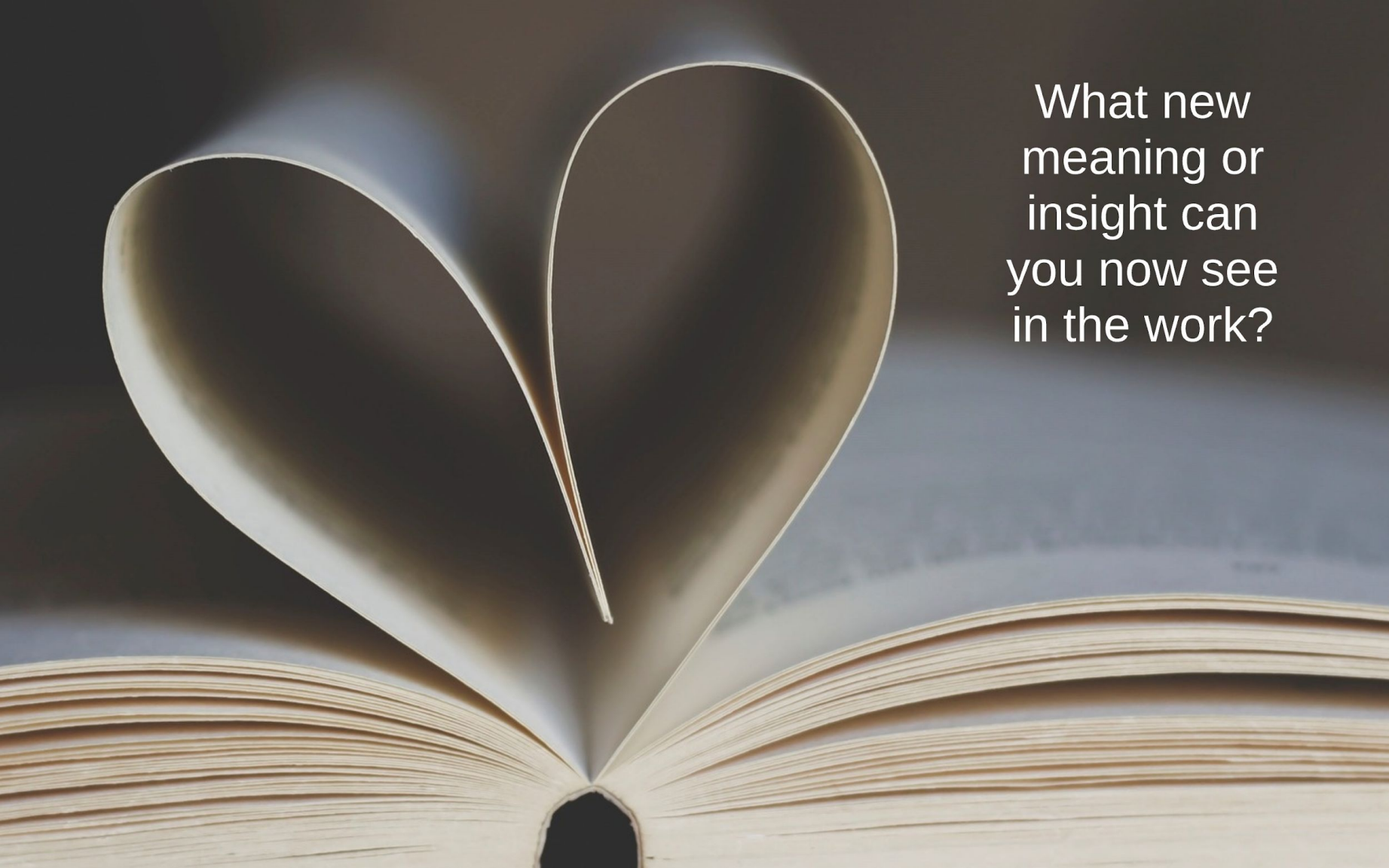
What's interesting about the rhyme scheme, the meter of the lines, or the physical layout of the text and use of white space on the page? How might these elements contribute to the poem's overall message or theme?



Read the poem
one more time,
aloud if possible.



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What new
meaning or
insight can
you now see
in the work?

Why bother?
Don't poetry just annoy
grating and unimpassioned?



- Steps to follow:
- 1 Show no fear.
 - 2 Read the title, then STOP.
 - 3 Read the poem all the way through.
 - 4 Annotate.

How to Read a Poem

- 6 Identify the narrator.
Identify the voice speaking in the poem. What do you know about the speaker? What is the speaker's attitude towards the subject of the poem?
- 7
- 8 Figure out the structure.
- 9 Read the poem one more time, aloud if possible.




Now you have a step-by-step
procedure to follow
when you read a poem.

All that's left is to
learn a little lingo.

Complete the worksheet
I'm going to hand out now.

We'll talk about the answers in a few minutes.