

HOW TO ANNOTATE A POEM INSTRUCTIONS

STEP 1: Reflect on the Poem's Title

Consider whether the title is important to the meaning of the poem. Why do you think the author chose this title?

STEP 2: Clarify

Spend time clarifying those things you do not understand. Underline the words you do not know and find the meanings for the words (or synonyms). Jot those down somewhere near the term and put them in brackets. If there are lines you don't understand, put a beside them and see if they become more clear as you continue to annotate.

STEP 3: Summarize & Paraphrase

Read through the poem and write your understanding of what is happening along the side of each stanza. You are basically summarizing the basic sense of the poem. Consider the following questions: Who is speaking? To whom? About what? For what purpose? When and where? Consider the tone of the poem. At this point, those confusing lines from step 2 may be more clear!

STEP 4: Literary Devices

Now that you have an understanding of what is happening in the poem, you should be underlining or highlighting any uses of figurative language or literary devices. Some examples of these may include metaphor, simile, imagery, personification, hyperbole, oxymoron, allusion, alliteration etc. Color coding these may be useful for you. You may also comment on why you think the author chose to use this, or what it does to enhance the poem.

STEP 5: Poetic Form

The form of the poem can also play an important role in the meaning. Go through the poem and label the rhyme scheme beside the lines (or write a form section at the bottom of the page) and the meter (rhythm). Also check to see if there is anything significant to mention about the way the poem looks on the page (punctuation, shape, line length).

STEP 6: Interpretation (Theme)

After you have done steps 1-5, consider the reason that the poet wrote this poem. What does he/she want you to think about? What message are they trying to send? Explain this theme along the bottom of the page.

STEP 7: Finishing Touches

If there is anything else that stands out to you as important, or something that you were thinking about while reading, make annotations along the side! Don't feel tied to these steps. If you think of something interesting, write it down!

HOW TO ANNOTATE A POEM

I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud

By William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

...

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed--and gazed--but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.