

How to write about a poem

Start by reading the poem again and thinking what it means to you. If you cannot understand it completely, don't worry! Often by the time you have explored it with the help of this check list the meaning will have become much clearer by the end.

- Each of these points will make a paragraph about the poem.
- Do not use headings for each paragraph when you write an essay. Each paragraph should flow into the next paragraph
- Prove every point you make by using a quotation from the poem.

Your introduction

Paragraph 1

- Start your essay by giving the title of the poem and the name of the poet.
- Try to classify the poem. What sort of poem is it? (eg. sonnet, limerick, haiku, ode, acrostic, ballad, dramatic monologue, shape etc.)
- Briefly write about the subject of the poem.

Imagery used in the poem to express the themes

Paragraph 2

- What are the pictures in the poem?
- Are metaphors, similes or personification used to explain ideas?
- Are there parts of the poem that ask you to use your senses of hearing, sight, smell, touch or taste? Do these add to your enjoyment of the poem?

Form and structure

Paragraph 3

- How is the poem arranged on the page? (eg. lines, verses, layout, shape.)
- Where are there breaks in the poem?
- Look at the length of the lines - do they make a pattern? Are some lines short?
- Is there a progression between one verse and the next?
- Why do you think that the poet has used this structure?

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Rhyme and rhythm

Paragraph 3 continued

- Does the poem rhyme? What is the rhyming pattern? (eg. ABAB or ABCB etc)
- Write about the rhythm of the poem. Which words have a strong beat?
- Why do you think the poet has chosen this rhyme and rhythm to express his ideas?

Language patterns

Paragraph 4

- Does the choice of words the poet has chosen help us share the poet's feelings?
- The poet uses certain words to trigger how we think about the poem. Which words are the "triggers" in this poem?
- Think about the sound of the poem. Look out for alliteration, onomatopoeia, and assonance. Check for the use of personification and symbolism and judge their effectiveness.

Explore and explain the themes of the poem

Paragraph 5

- Think about the themes (the ideas) the poet explores in the poem. What do you think the poem is really about?
- Write what you think is the message the poet is trying to make you share with him.
- Does the poem "work" for you? (Can you sympathise with the poet's view?)
- Finish by giving your thoughts and feelings about the poem.

Now check your work.

- Read it out loud and make sure that what you have written makes sense.
- Have you used quotes from the poem to back up your ideas? Don't use the same words as appear in the quotations – try to vary vocabulary and interpret the poet's words.
- Have you used quotation marks where they are needed?

Finish by writing down how long it took to complete this piece of work.
Write down how many words you have written.