

It is very likely that on the AP exam you will be required to carefully scrutinize a poem for not just its meaning, but also for the methods by which the poet constructs meaning. Preparing for this type of analysis requires regular exposure to challenging poems and practice. Then more practice.

The basics of a poetic response includes 2 parts

1. The dominant feature of the poem. This is often a thematic component (significance of [feature]... relationships between ideas/characters/images...connections to society...).
2. The physical components of the poem and their function. This is how the literary and rhetorical devices, metrical features, and other details contribute to meaning. This part of the prompt often expects you to consider where (and how) a poem shifts - this is not always mentioned in the prompt, but should be assumed to have prominence!

For this poem (which has been previously used on an AP Exam), you are to identify the two ways of living mentioned in the poem and discuss how the diction reveals the speaker's tone toward each. I encourage you to annotate the poem.

Poetry of Departures

BY Philip Larkin

Sometimes you hear, fifth-hand,
As epitaph:
He chuckled up everything
And just cleared off,
And always the voice will sound
Certain you approve
This audacious, purifying,
Elemental move.

And they are right, I think.
We all hate home
And having to be there:
I detest my room,
It's specially-chosen junk,
The good books, the good bed,
And my life, in perfect order:
So to hear it said

He walked out on the whole crowd
Leaves me flushed and stirred,
Like Then she undid her dress
Or Take that you bastard;
Surely I can, if he did?
And that helps me to stay
Sober and industrious.
But I'd go today,

Yes, swagger the nut-strewn roads,
Crouch in the fo'c'sle
Stubbly with goodness, if
It weren't so artificial,
Such a deliberate step backwards
To create an object:
Books; china; a life
Reprehensibly perfect.