

How to write about poetry?

- Begin by reading actively. Poetry must be read closely and carefully. You should pay close attention to choice of words and punctuation. Moreover, you should underline and comment on specific details as well as look up unfamiliar words and references.
- The literal meaning. What is actually happening in the poem? Who is the speaker? Remember that the poet is not the speaker in the poem. Is the speaker addressing a specific subject (i.e. another person)? What events take place and are described in the poem?
- The figurative meaning. What is the significance of the poem? This can be determined by considering:
 1. Figures of speech - imagery, metaphors, similes, hyperbole, personification, allusion (historical or meaning)
 2. Form-is the poem written in a closed form and it has a rhyme scheme as well as a metrical pattern? is the poem written in free verse and it has no particular rhyme scheme and/or metrical pattern?
 3. Structure - is the poem broken into stanzas? Are the lines long, short or a mixture of both? Are the lines end stopped or did the poet use enjambment?
 4. Mood is the atmosphere created by diction and rhyme. The mood may be somber, light-hearted, romantic, comical, silly, etc.
 5. Tone- the speaker's attitude toward the subject, the audience, or toward herself/himself.

How to quote a poem?

-Quoting few lines- If you are quoting less than 4 lines of poetry, incorporate the quote into your writing by separating each line with a space, diagonal (/) and another space. The diagonal (/) indicated where the poet chose to begin and end the lines of the poem. Do not change the poet's capitalization or punctuation. Be sure to identify the line numbers you are quoting in parenthesis at the end of the quotation.

Ex:

In order to convince the lady to be his, the shepherd in Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love," offers her everything in sight like "valleys, groves, hills, and fields / woods, or steepy mountains" (3-4).

-Quoting four or more lines- If you are quoting four or more lines of poetry set them up as a block quote. Indent the quotation one inch, or ten spaces, from the left hand margin. Omit quotation marks from the beginning and end of the quote. If you begin the quotation in the middle of the line of poetry, position the starting word about where it occurs in the poem. If the line you are quoting runs too long to fit on one line, indent the return one-quarter inch or three spaces. Include line numbers in parenthesis.

Ex:

The speaker in Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" offers his lady gifts such as a

[10 spaces] bed of roses
And a thousand fragrant poises,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;

A gown made of the finest wool
.....(omitted line)
Fair lined slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold; (9-12, 13, 15-16)