

Analyzing Poetry

Introduction

Analyzing poetry sounds difficult, but it isn't hard if you take it one piece at a time. We're going to break it down step by step and see what we can discover about our poem. We'll do this with two goals in mind. Our first goal is just to enjoy the poem. Remember that most of the time, poets wrote poems so people would enjoy them. Don't get so stressed about figuring them out that you forget to enjoy them. Our second goal is to analyze them so we can discover what the poet is trying to say to us and learn about how he or she communicated those ideas. That will help us enjoy the poem even more and learn how to write poems that communicate our ideas to others.

Step One:

Read the poem thoughtfully and carefully out loud. Then read it silently to yourself. Are there any words of which you aren't sure of the meaning? Write them down.

Step Two:

What do you think the words mean from their context in the poem? Write down your thoughts and then look them up in a dictionary. Revise or expand their definitions based on what you learn.

Step Three:

What is the title of the poem? Is it obvious how it relates to what the poem is about? If not, what do you think the title might be referring to?

Step Four:

What is the setting? Where does the poem take place? What details do you notice about the setting?

Step Five:

What perspective or point of view is the poem written from? Is it something the speaker experienced? Is it something that happened in the past? Is it happening now or is it something that might happen in the future?

Step Six:

What words or phrases are repeated?

Why do you think the poet did this?

Good Friday

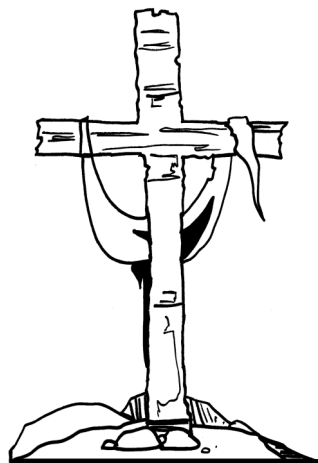
by Christina Georgina Rossetti

Am I a stone and not a sheep
That I can stand, O Christ, beneath Thy Cross,
To number drop by drop Thy Blood's slow loss,
And yet not weep?

Not so those women loved
Who with exceeding grief lamented Thee;
Not so fallen Peter weeping bitterly;
Not so the thief was moved;

Not so the Sun and Moon
Which hid their faces in a starless sky,
A horror of great darkness at broad noon—
I, only I.

Yet give not o'er,
But seek Thy sheep, true Shepherd of the flock;
Greater than Moses, turn and look once more
And smite a rock.



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