

# UNLOCKING POETRY

“The text is a lazy machine that needs to be activated” (Eco).

Poems are lazy. To activate them, you have to do more than say “I don’t get it” and wait for the teacher to explain it. You must treat poems like songs. You don’t always relate to a song the first time, but after several listens, you know all of the lyrics, can make sense of them, and the song becomes you. You must read the poem several times before it can become you. On your second or third reading, do a close reading. Close reading involves interacting with the text as you read. Small details can suggest larger ideas and pinpoint your focus on HOW meaning is revealed. Become a close reader by marking and annotating your interactions with text as you read.

1. **QCC:** Write **questions, comments, and connections** in the margins. When you have a question or need clarification, write down your uncertainty. When you discover something surprising, fun, or exciting that makes you say wow, cool, awesome, yuck, no way, whoa, etc., put a comment in the margin. When you discover something new, a knowledge you did not have before or a knowledge that can connect or add to something previously learned, write down your new knowledge and its connection to what you already know, to your own experiences, or to other texts.
2. **△ Triangle** characters’ names so they are easy to locate on each page.
3. **□ Box** each word you do not know. Write brief definitions beside them if you do not figure them out from context clues.
4. **○ Circle and label** literary elements. (Here are some of the literary elements that you may find: allusion, ambiguity, antithesis, apostrophe, archetype, asyndeton, colloquialism, conceit, ethos, flashback, foreshadowing, hyperbole, imagery, irony, litotes, logos, metaphor, metonymy, motif, paradox, parallelism, pathos, personification, polysyndeton, rhetorical question, satire, simile, symbol, synecdoche, theme, etc. You do not have to find all of them; you may find some that are not listed. If you need definitions for any literary terms, use the following link: <https://literarydevices.net>.)
5. **≈ Put wavy lines** under patterns or repetitions. If the patterns or repetitions are literary or syntactical elements, label them with alliteration, anadiplosis, anaphora, assonance, epianalepsis, epistrophe, sibilance, parallelism, theme, etc.
6. **/Mark off** sentences with backward slashes (pay attention to semicolons and colons, parentheses, italics, compound-complex sentences, etc.) This can help with poetry, archaic language, compound-complex sentences, etc.
7. **Rewrite** inverted phrases/sentences beside the original.
8. **★Star** shifts or turns in the text resulting from a realization, insight, style choice, etc.
9. **Write down the rhyme scheme** at the end of each line of poetry. (ex. aabba)
10. **Count the number of syllables** in a few lines and write that number at the end of the lines to ascertain the prosody.
11. **Count the number of lines** and write it below the poem to ascertain the type of poem.
12. **Make a dramatic situation chart.**

Who is speaking or narrating?	
To whom?	
About what/subject?	
When/Where?	
Why/Purpose?	
Tone?	

*Need More Help?*

- paraphrase the poem
- explicate the poem
- read poetic criticisms