

Poetry Interpretation Assignment

In order to understand what a poem means you need to read through the poem at least three times. Each time you read the poem, you uncover another level of meaning.

Directions: Read the four poem selections provided to you by renowned poets. Choose one of the poems and complete the following assignment.

Part A Analysis

1. Use a chart like the one provided to analyze the poem you have selected. In each successive reading, look for a deeper level of meaning in what the poet is saying.

<u>First Reading</u>	<u>Second Reading</u>	<u>Third Reading</u>
Here's what I liked about the poem: • • • • •	I think _____'s_ (poet's name) message(s) in this poem were: • • • • •	The poet uses figurative language to compare the following things in this poem: • • • • •

2. Identify five quotes (lines or stanzas) from the poem that support your interpretation of the meaning of the poem. For each quote you must analyze what the author is saying and explain how it supports your opinion.

Part B Applying

1. Describe the emotions that the poem invokes in you now that you have a more complete understanding of its deeper meaning. Explain why you feel these emotions. What tone/ mood did the poet use to in-still these emotions?
2. In a minimum of half of a page, make a connection between the poem and your life. Explain how the poem you selected relates to a real life event. Be sure to provide specific examples from the poem to backup your opinions.
3. In a minimum of 14 lines, compose your own poem, inspired by the content of the poem you originally selected, or the real life event you outlined in Part B question #2. If possible, try to write your poem in the same style as the poem you have interpreted.

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village, though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep

Mary E. Frye

Do not stand at my grave and weep
I am not there. I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry;
I am not there. I did not die.

Where the Sidewalk Ends

Shel Silverstein

There is a place where the sidewalk ends
And before the street begins,
And there the grass grows soft and white,
And there the sun burns crimson bright,
And there the moon-bird rests from his flight
To cool in the peppermint wind.

Let us leave this place where the smoke blows black
And the dark street winds and bends.
Past the pits where the asphalt flowers grow
We shall walk with a walk that is measured and slow,
And watch where the chalk-white arrows go
To the place where the sidewalk ends.

Yes we'll walk with a walk that is measured and slow,
And we'll go where the chalk-white arrows go,
For the children, they mark, and the children, they know
The place where the sidewalk ends.

From THE HOLLOW MEN

T. S. ELIOT

I

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rats' feet over broken glass
In our dry cellar
Shape without form, shade without colour,
Paralysed force, gesture without motion;
Those who have crossed
With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom
Remember us—if at all—not as lost
Violent souls, but only
As the hollow men
The stuffed men.

THE SHELL

JAMES STEPHENS

And then I pressed the shell
Close to my ear
And listened well,
And straightway, like a bell,
Came low and clear
The slow, sad murmur of far distant seas,
Whipped by an icy breeze
Upon a shore
Wind-swept and desolate.

It was a sunless strand that never bore
The footprint of a man,
Nor felt the weight
Since time began
Of any human quality or stir
Save what the dreary winds and waves incur.
And in the hush of waters was the sound
Of pebbles rolling round;
For ever rolling with a hollow sound:
And bubbling sea-weeds as the waters go
Swish to and fro
Their long, cold tentacles of slimy gray;
There was no day,
Nor ever came a night
Setting the stars alight
To wonder at the moon:
Was twilight only and the frightened croon,
Smitten to whimpers, of the dreary wind
And waves that journeyed blind—
And then I loosed my ear . . . O, it was sweet
To hear a cart go jolting down the street!

10

20

30

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

ROBERT FROST

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller; long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same.

10

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.

The Fly

William Blake

Little Fly,
Thy summer's play
My thoughtless hand
Has brushed away.
Am not I
A fly like thee?
Or art not thou
A man like me?
For I dance,
And drink, and sing,
Till some blind hand
Shall brush my wing.
If thought is life
And strength and breath,
And the want
Of thought is death;
Then am I
A happy fly.
If I live,
Or if I die.

From THE HOLLOW MEN

T. S. ELIOT

I

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rats' feet over broken glass
In our dry cellar
Shape without form, shade without colour,
Paralysed force, gesture without motion;
Those who have crossed
With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom
Remember us—if at all—not as lost
Violent souls, but only
As the hollow men
The stuffed men.

THE SHELL

JAMES STEPHENS

And then I pressed the shell
Close to my ear
And listened well,
And straightway, like a bell,
Came low and clear
The slow, sad murmur of far distant seas,
Whipped by an icy breeze
Upon a shore
Wind-swept and desolate.

It was a sunless strand that never bore
The footprint of a man,
Nor felt the weight
Since time began
Of any human quality or stir
Save what the dreary winds and waves incur.
And in the hush of waters was the sound
Of pebbles rolling round;
For ever rolling with a hollow sound:
And bubbling sea-weeds as the waters go
Swish to and fro
Their long, cold tentacles of slimy gray;
There was no day,
Nor ever came a night
Setting the stars alight
To wonder at the moon:
Was twilight only and the frightened croon,
Smitten to whimpers, of the dreary wind
And waves that journeyed blind—
And then I loosed my ear . . . O, it was sweet
To hear a cart go jolting down the street!