

Analyzing Poetry

READ: **Figurative language** is language that is used imaginatively rather than literally. It includes **figures of speech**—literary devices that make **unexpected** comparisons or that change the usual meaning of words.

simile: comparison using “like” or “as” ~ **metaphor**: comparison of one thing as if it were another ~ **personification**: giving human characteristics or emotions to non-human things ~ **paradox**: a statement, idea, or situation that seems contradictory in-and-of-itself BUT actually expresses a truth: EX “The more things change, the more they stay the same.”

READ: Poet bio: (1902-1967) *Born in Joplin, Missouri, **Langston Hughes** was the first African-American to earn a living by writing literary works. As a young man, he held a variety of jobs—teacher, ranch hand, and farmer among others. He drew on all of these experiences, but primarily on his perspective as an **African-American**, to create his great body of works.*



Dream Deferred

by Langston Hughes

- 1 What happens to a dream deferred?
- 2 Does it dry up
- 3 like a raisin in the sun?
- 4 Or fester like a sore—
- 5 And then run?
- 6 Does it stink like rotten meat?
- 7 Or crust and sugar over—
- 8 like a syrupy sweet?
- 9 Maybe it just sags
- 10 like a heavy load.
- 11 Or does it explode?

Dreams

by Langston Hughes

- 1 Hold fast to dreams
- 2 For if dreams die
- 3 Life is a broken-winged bird
- 4 That cannot fly.
- 5 Hold fast to dreams
- 6 For when dreams go
- 7 Life is a barren field
- 8 Frozen with snow.



READ: Poet bio: (1770-1850) ***William Wordsworth** was born in England’s rural Lake District. In 1798 he and fellow poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge published Lyrical Ballads—poems that **use simple language to exalt everyday life.** Emphasizing nature and the imagination, Wordsworth ushered in the age of **Romanticism.***

I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud by William Wordsworth

- 1 I wandered lonely as a cloud
- 2 That floats on high o’er vales and hills,
- 3 When all at once I saw a crowd,
- 4 A host, of golden daffodils;
- 5 Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
- 6 Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
- 7 Continuous as the stars that shine
- 8 And twinkle on the milky way,
- 9 They stretched in never-ending line
- 10 Along the margin of a bay:
- 11 Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
- 12 Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

"I Wandered" continued

13 The waves beside them danced; but
they
14 Outdid the sparkling waves in glee;
15 A poet could not but be gay,
16 In such a jocund company;
17 I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
18 What wealth the show to me had
brought:

19 For oft, when on my couch I lie
20 In vacant or in pensive mood,
21 They flash upon that inward eye
22 Which is the bliss of solitude;
23 And then my heart with pleasure fills,
24 And dances with the daffodils.

READ: Poet bio: (1889-1957) Born in **Chile** as *Lucila Godoy y Alcayaga*, this writer (**Gabriela Mistral**) formed her pen name from the names of her two favorite poets: the Italian Gabriele D'Annunzio and the French Frederic Mistral. Gabriela Mistral wrote many **moving poems about children and motherhood**.



Rocking (*Meciendo*) by Gabriela Mistral (translated into English by Doris Dana)

1 The sea rocks her
thousands of waves.
2 The sea is divine.
3 Hearing the loving sea,
4 I rock my son.
5 The wind wandering by
night
6 rocks the wheat.
7 Hearing the loving wind,
8 I rock my son.
9 God, the Father,
soundlessly rocks
10 His thousands of worlds.
11 Feeling His hand in the
shadow,
12 I rock my son.

READ: Poet bio: (1557-1595) The French poet **Jean de Sponde** was a true Renaissance man who served in the court of King Henry IV, dabbled in chemistry, and **published scholarly editions of ancient Greek texts**.

READ: **Background:** Archimedes (287-212 BC) has been called the founder of theoretical mechanics. He was a brilliant Greek mathematician and inventor who once boasted that, given a place to stand in space and a long enough lever, he could move the Earth itself. Legend has it that when he made a great discovery, he jumped up and shouted "Eureka!" = "I have found it!"

Sonnets on Love XIII by Jean de Sponde (translated by David R Slavitt)

1 "Give me a place to stand," Archimedes said,
2 "and I can move the world." Paradoxical, clever,
3 his remark which first explained the use of the lever
4 was an academic joke. But if that dead
5 sage could return to life, he would find a clear
6 demonstration of his idea, which is not
7 pure theory after all. That putative spot
8 exists in the love I feel for you, my dear.

⁹ What could be more immovable or stronger?
¹⁰ What becomes more and more secure, the longer
¹¹ it is battered by inconstancy and the stress

¹² we find in our lives? Here is that fine fixed point
¹³ from which to move a world that is out of joint,
¹⁴ as he could have done, had he known a love like this.

1. In "Dream Deferred," which of following is the best paraphrase of line 1?

- A. Putting off a dream can be disappointing—even dangerous.
- B. Some dreams must be put off.
- C. What happens when a dream is not realized?
- D. What happens when people dream?

2. In "Dream Deferred," what figure of speech does the author use in lines 2-3?

- A. simile
- B. metaphor
- C. personification
- D. paradox

3. Which sentence best summarizes the message of "Dream Deferred"?

- A. Dreams get more and more confusing the longer they are postponed.
- B. People always wonder what happens to dreams they never fulfill.
- C. People lose interest in dreams that are not fulfilled.
- D. Postponing dreams can lead to frustration and even violence.

4. In "Dreams," the speaker compares life without dreams to which of the following?

- A. an eagle on a cliff
- B. a bird with a broken wing
- C. a heavy, sagging load
- D. a raging storm

5. In "Dreams," the theme concerns:

- A. the way to make your dreams come true
- B. the vital link between dreams and hope
- C. the foolishness of unrealistic dreams
- D. the false appeal of dreams about money

6. In "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," what figure of speech do lines 13-14 illustrate?

- A. simile
- B. metaphor
- C. personification
- D. paradox

7. In "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," what is the speaker doing when he says that the daffodils "flash upon that inward eye"?

- A. looking at a photograph of daffodils taken with a flash
- B. recalling the visual memory of the daffodils
- C. looking at a bunch of daffodils in a vase
- D. making plans to revisit the place where he saw the daffodils

8. In "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," what effect does the sight of the daffodils seem to have on the speaker as he views the scene?

- A. Knowing the flowers won't last, he feels frustrated.
- B. He wants to be with friends who will share the sight.
- C. He is no longer calm, but anxious.
- D. He is no longer lonely and troubled, but joyful.

9. What is the speaker in "Rocking" doing?

- A. listening to the ocean's waves crash
- B. rocking her child
- C. praying by the sea
- D. sitting at the edge of a wheat field

10. In "Rocking," what figure of speech is used in lines 1-4?

- A. simile
- B. metaphor
- C. personification
- D. paradox

11. What is the tone of "Rocking"?

- A. agitated
- B. aggressive
- C. loving
- D. despairing

12. What is the theme of "Rocking"?

- A. the love of a mother for her child
- B. the calming effect of the sea
- C. the chilly night breezes
- D. the influence of nature on our lives

13. What is a **paradox**?

- A. a comparison using "like" or "as"
- B. giving human qualities to something non-human
- C. something that seems to contradict itself but is actually true
- D. something that is what it is, but has a greater meaning as well

14. In "Sonnets on Love XIII," the speaker makes a connection between ancient Greek scientist Archimedes and what?

- A. the circumference of the Earth
- B. the structure of the solar system
- C. the beauty of love
- D. the beauty of nature

15. What is the message of "Sonnets on Love XIII"?

- A. Love is fleeting and often deceptive.
- B. All too often, love is not reciprocated.
- C. Love cheers the heart and makes lovers merry.
- D. The power of love is virtually immeasurable.

READ: Narrative poetry is verse that tells a story and includes the same literary elements as narrative prose: a plot, a specific setting, and characters. Like the narrative prose of a short story, a narrative poem conveys a **mood**—an overall emotional atmosphere: “gloomy,” “joyous,” or “mysterious” for example.

**Poetry’s emphasis on precise words and images makes mood a powerful element in a narrative poem.

Paraphrasing is restating in your OWN words what someone else has written or said. A paraphrase retains the meaning but is simpler. Paraphrasing helps you read poetry because poems often contain **figurative language**—words that are used imaginatively rather than literally.

READ: Poet bio: (1863-1940) *It is not surprising that “Casey at the Bat” reads like a sports story in verse. The poet, Ernest Lawrence Thayer, worked for many years as a sports reporter on the staff of newspapers in New York and California. “Casey at the Bat” first appeared in 1888 and became so popular that it inspired an operetta called The Mighty Casey in 1953.*



Casey at the Bat by Ernest Lawrence Thayer

¹ The outlook wasn’t brilliant for the Mudville nine that day;
The score stood four to two with but one inning more to play.
And then when Cooney died at first, and Barrows did the same,
A sickly silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

⁵ A straggling few got up to go in deep despair. The rest
Clung to that hope which springs eternal in the human breast;
They thought if only Casey could but get a whack at that—
We’d put up even money now with Casey at the bat.

⁹ But Flynn preceded Casey, as did also Jimmy Blake,
And the former was a lulu and the latter was a cake;
So upon that stricken multitude grim melancholy sat,
For there seemed but little chance of Casey’s getting to the bat.

¹³ But Flynn let drive a single, to the wonderment of all,
And Blake, the much despised, tore the cover off the ball;
And when the dust had lifted, and men saw what had occurred,
There was Jimmy safe at second and Flynn a-hugging third.

¹⁷ Then from 5,000 throats and more there rose a lusty yell;
It rumbled through the valley, it rattled in the dell;
It knocked upon the mountain and recoiled upon the flat,
For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.

21 There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place;
There was pride in Casey's bearing and a smile on Casey's face.
And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly doffed his hat,
No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat.

25 Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt;
Five thousand tongues applauded when he wiped them on his shirt.
Then while the writhing pitcher ground the ball into his hip,
Defiance gleamed in Casey's eye, a sneer curled Casey's lip.

29 And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air,
And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there.
Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped—
"That ain't my style," said Casey. "Strike one," the umpire said.

33 From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,
Like the beating of the storm-waves on a stern and distant shore.
"Kill him! Kill the umpire!" shouted some one on the stand;
And it's likely they'd have killed him had not Casey raised his hand.

37 With a smile of Christian charity great Casey's visage shone;
He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on;
He signaled to the pitcher, and once more the spheroid flew;
But Casey still ignored it, and the umpire said, "Strike two."

41 "Fraud!" cried the maddened thousands, and echo answered fraud;
But one scornful look from Casey and the audience was awed.
They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his muscles strain,
And they knew that Casey wouldn't let that ball go by again.

45 The sneer is gone from Casey's lip, his teeth are clinched in hate;
He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate.
And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.

49 Oh, somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright;
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light,
And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout;
But there is no joy in Mudville—mighty Casey has struck out.



READ: Poet bio: (1914-1993) *Raised in Kansas, William Stafford did not publish his first book until he was 46. However, he made up for lost time after that, publishing many collections. Fellow poet Robert Bly has said that Stafford's poems are "spoken like a friend over coffee."*

Fifteen by William Stafford

¹ South of the bridge on Seventeenth
I found, back of the willows one
summer
day, a motorcycle with engine running
as it lay on its side, ticking over
slowly in the high grass. I was fifteen.

⁶ I admired all that pulsing gleam, the
shiny flanks, the demure headlights
fringed where it lay; I led it gently
to the road, and stood with that
companion, ready and friendly. I was
fifteen.

¹¹ We could find the end of a road, meet
the sky on out Seventeenth. I thought
about
hills, and patting the handle got back a
confident opinion. On the bridge we

indulged
a forward feeling, a tremble. I was
fifteen.

¹⁶ Thinking, back farther in the grass I
found

¹⁷ the owner, just coming to, where he
had flipped

¹⁸ over the rail. He had blood on his
hand, was pale--

I helped him walk to his machine. He
ran his hand
over it, called me good man, roared
away.

²¹ I stood there, fifteen.

Continued...

16. Which of the following most accurately describes Casey when he steps up to bat in "Casey at the Bat"?

- A. angry
- B. confident
- C. nervous
- D. scornful

17. Which of the following is most important to include in a paraphrase of "Casey at the Bat"?

- A. Casey lets the first two pitches go by without swinging.
- B. Casey doffs his hat to the crowd.
- C. Casey pounds his bat on the plate.
- D. Casey raises his hand when the crowd shouts "Kill the umpire!"

18. What is the climax of "Casey at the Bat"?

- A. Flynn hits a single
- B. Casey steps up to bat.
- C. The umpire calls the first strike on Casey.
- D. Casey swings at the third pitch.

19. What is the best paraphrase of lines 13-14 in "Casey at the Bat"?

- A. Both Flynn and Blakey got hits.
- B. Neither Flynn nor Blakey got hits.
- C. Flynn got a single, but Blakey angrily destroyed the ball.
- D. Flynn reached first base, but Blakey struck out.

20. Which of the following is likely the message of "Casey at the Bat"?

- A. Baseball players should not let pitches go by.
- B. Baseball fans should not trust the umpire.
- C. People should not expect too much from their heroes.
- D. A ball game is not worth getting excited about.

21. What distinguishes *narrative poetry* from other types of poetry?

- A. It expresses a theme.
- B. It uses rhyme.
- C. It seeks to persuade readers.
- D. It tells a story.

22. What is the main conflict in "Casey at the Bat"?

- A. Casey vs. the umpire
- B. Mudville vs. the opposing team
- C. the umpire vs. the crowd
- D. Casey vs. the pitcher

23. What does the umpire do to Casey in "Casey at the Bat"?

- A. calls the first two strikes on Casey
- B. calls three strikes on Casey
- C. intimidates Casey into striking out
- D. favors the opposing team

24. Which best defines *paraphrase*?

- A. a restatement in your own words of what someone else has written or said
- B. a brief summary of a lengthy text
- C. a direct quote of a speaker's words
- D. a series of notes indicating questions for future words

25. In "Fifteen," what does the motorcycle represent to the boy?

- A. money

- B. speed
- C. danger
- D. adventure

26. In a paraphrase of the speaker's description of the motorcycle in "Fifteen," which of the following would you stress?

- A. the speaker's lack of understanding
- B. the speaker's admiration
- C. the speaker's anxiety
- D. the speaker's boredom

27. What does the boy in "Fifteen" consider doing?

- A. riding off on the motorcycle
- B. exploring the end of 17th Street
- C. avoiding involvement in the mystery
- D. going for help

28. In "Fifteen," which of the following best describes the function in the story that lines 16-17 do?

- A. They show the main conflict.
- B. They represent the turning point in the action.
- C. They reveal the speaker's identity.
- D. They introduce the main character.

29. Which of the following is the best description of events in the poem "Fifteen"?

- A. a growing awareness of the physical dangers faced by adults
- B. a moment between childhood dreams and adult decisions
- C. nostalgia for a lost neighborhood in the 1950s
- D. the speaker's desire to escape his town