

Lecture Notes—Poetry

How to Read a Poem

1. Carefully, thoughtfully and sympathetically
2. Poems are economical and compressed—everything must carry an impact.
3. You must become actively involved to glean meaning.

✓ Tools to use:

1. **language**
2. **imagery**
3. **rhythms**
4. **ideas**

4. Open your mind.

✓ Techniques

1. Read straight through for general sense of topic
2. Then read step-by-step
3. Read the title
4. Who is speaking?
5. Familiar and unfamiliar words or familiar words used in an unfamiliar way
6. Where is the setting?
7. Determine the subject and theme—which usually must be inferred as it is not apparent at first reading
8. Basic form and development: line endings, punctuation, stanzas, sensory details
9. Read the poem aloud, sounding each word clearly in your mind or aloud
10. Prepare a paraphrase—carefully determine what each line is saying
11. Analysis is called explication and looks for meaning and significance