**Poetry Analysis Guide**

**Instructions: Use the following questions to help you in the analysis of your chosen poem. This guide will help you to gather your ideas and information about the poem before writing the analysis. Please submit both your answers to these questions along with the completed poetry analysis to your teacher.**

**Discovering Meaning and Theme**

1. Look at the title. What does it mean? How does it contribute to the overall meaning of the poem? Can you predict anything about the poem from the title?
2. Read the poem silently and then aloud. Write down all the ideas, emotions and/or thoughts the poem suggests to you. Write down any questions you have about the poem.
3. Pay attention to the punctuation and use it as you read: commas require a short pause; semi-colons require a longer pause between connected ideas; colons signal something is coming; periods are a major stop, and a dash is an informal way of showing a connection between ideas. **Read the poem aloud again,** paying attention to the punctuation and how it influences meaning.
4. Can you find more than one meaning in the poem?
5. What is the tone of the poem? What is the speaker’s attitude toward the subject of the poem?
6. What is the theme – the central idea the poet communicates about the subject?
7. Paraphrase or summarize the poem in your own words. What are the key lines that contribute the most to the meaning of the poem?

**Pattern and Form**

1. Is the poem written in a traditional form (sonnet, ballad, elegy, etc.)?
2. How many lines does the poem have? Does the arrangement of lines have an effect on the meaning of the poem?
3. **Rhyme scheme**: Is the poem rhymed or unrhymed? If it is rhymed, are rhymed words at the end of the lines or in the middle of the lines? Describe the rhyme scheme used, if any.
4. **Meter**: When you read the poem, do you notice a particular rhythm or meter? Mark the rhythm and decide if there is a regular pattern. How does the rhythm contribute to the meaning of the poem?

**Images and other poetic devices**

1. Poets use sensory language – words that appeal to our sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch – to enhance our experience. What words or phrases in the poem appeal to the senses? What effect do these words have on the overall effect of the poem?
2. Look at the connotation of certain key words in the poem. Do any of them have meanings beyond the literal meaning?
3. Are there any words used in the poem that you do not understand? Please define these.
4. Does the poem contain any of the following poetic devices?
5. Allusion – a reference in one piece of literature to a person, place or event, in history, art, or another piece of literature.
6. Metaphor – a comparison between two objects without using the words “like” or “as.” An example is, “A summer is a dark blue hammock slung between two pillars of day.”
7. Personification – a figure of speech which endows animals, ideas, or inanimate objects with human traits or abilities. An example is “Fog nestled sleeping in the valley.” If personification appears in your chosen poem, identify which human traits are applied to what non-human element. What effect does this have on the reader?
8. Paradox – a statement that seems contradictory yet it is true. An example is, “To be great is to be misunderstood” or “Good men must not obey laws too well.”
9. Simile – a comparison between two objects using words such as “like,” “as,” or “than.” An example is, “The big ram had horns curling like a morning glory vine.”
10. Symbolism – the use of symbols to represent ideas.
11. Hyperbole – an exaggeration
12. Does your chosen poem contain any of the following **sound devices**?
13. **Alliteration** – the repetition of initial consonant sounds like “blooms and blows” or “merriment their melody” or are **consonance** or **assonance** used?
14. **Onomatopoeia** – the use of words that imitate sounds like “tinkle, buzz, sizzle.”
15. **Repetition** – are any words, phrases, lines or ideas repeated? Why?

**The Poet**

Research and read about the life of the poet. Is there anything in the poet’s life that connects directly to the poem? Perhaps a specific event or person? How does the poem reflect the time period in which it was written?