Study Guide

Poetry
03/19/2012

**Poem - D**To comprehend a poem, the student must use the details to construct overall meaning.

Here are some helpful tips to help the student interpret the format and meaning of a poem. Understanding poetry often involves interpreting the feelings of the speaker in the poem and analyzing figurative language.

Poetry is written in many different forms. Poems are organized in groups of verses, or lines, called stanzas. A poem may contain multiple stanzas, or only one. Some poems rhyme while others are free verse, or non-rhyming. The rhyme scheme is the pattern of rhyme in a poem.

The mood and tone describe the emotional voice of a poem. A poet conveys tone and mood by his or her choice of words. Read the following verses and pay attention to how different their moods are. Although both examples are about a boy, the mood of the first verse is more lighthearted than the mood of the second verse.

 The silly boy skipped along,
 And sang a happy skipping song.

 The boy walked slowly down the way,
 Wishing for the happiness of yesterday.

Poets use both literal and figurative language to set the mood or to create mental pictures in the reader's mind. As the student reads a poem, ask whether specific words are being used literally or figuratively.

Literal language provides a real description of a situation.
 Ex. The dog **bit** the man's bare arms. (The word "bit" is being used literally to explain that the dog actually bit the man.)

Figurative language gives an artistic impression of a situation.
 Ex. The cold wind **bit** the man's bare cheeks. (The word "bit" is used figuratively to give a mental picture of how the wind felt against the man's skin. The wind did not actually bite him.)

Definitions and examples of figurative language include:

1. Simile- a comparison between two dissimilar things, which uses the word "like" or "as"
 Ex. Sandra's beauty blossomed **like** a flower. (Sandra is being compared to a flower.)

2. Metaphor- a comparison between two dissimilar things without the use of the words "like" or "as"
 Ex. The burning flame of love will consume me. (Love is being compared to a flame.)

3. Personification- a description that gives human characteristics to nonhuman items or ideas
 Ex. I turned into the wind, letting it tickle my nose. (The wind cannot actually tickle someone.)

4. Imagery- a description that creates a vivid mental picture in the reader's mind
Read, then compare the following examples. The first description contains imagery and creates a picture in the reader's mind. The second does not contain imagery.
 Ex. The delicate fingers of early morning light crept over my windowsill.
 Ex. The early morning light moved over my windowsill.

5. Onomatopoeia - words sound like what they are
 Ex. The bees were **buzzing** in my ear.

Setting is the time and place in which the poem takes place.

Making inferences all require the student to use prior knowledge, personal experiences, and underlying ideas from the story to arrive at some type of hypothesis or educated guess.

**Practice:**
The most direct way to help the student understand and appreciate poetry is to check out some books of poetry from the library. Have the student choose a poem and read it aloud. Next, ask the student to create a song from the poetry reading. The song should incorporate the topic of the poem and a similar rhyme pattern. The student should also incorporate several examples of figurative language into the song. Overall, the song should be creative and demonstrate the student's understanding of the poem.