Poetry.

(Cover page to make the packet an even 40 pages)
As a start to our new unit of poetry, your job is to visually depict what poetry is using one of the following quotations on an 8x11 piece of paper. Embellish in any way you’d like. Color. Googly eyes. Whatever. We will then make a collage of all your responses.

Webster’s Dictionary Definition:
Poetry n. Compositions designed to convey a vivid and imaginative sense of experience, characterized by the use of condensed language, chosen for its sound and suggestive use of condensed language, chosen for its sound and suggestive power as well as its meaning, and by the use of such literary techniques as structured meter, natural cadences, rhyme, or metaphor.

Poetry is:

“A poem is an idea caught in the act of dawning.”  —Robert Frost
“things that are true expressed in words that are beautiful.”  —Dante
“the art of uniting pleasure with truth by calling imagination to the help of reason.”  —Samuel Johnson
“the best words in the best order.”  —Samuel Taylor Coleridge
“the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.”  —William Wordsworth
“musical thought.”  —Thomas Carlyle
“emotion put into measure.”  —Thomas Hardy
“If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that it is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that it is poetry. These are the only ways I know it. Is there any other way?”  —Emily Dickinson
“speech framed-to be heard for its own sake and interest even over and above its interest of meaning.”  —Gerard Manley Hopkins
“a way of remembering what it would impoverish us to forget.”  —Robert Frost
“a revelation in words by means of the words.”  —Wallace Stevens
“not the assertion that something is true, but the making of that truth more fully real to us.”  —T.S. Eliot
“the body of linguistic constructions that men usually refer to as poems.”  —J. V. Cunningham
“hundreds of things coming together at the right moment.”  —Elizabeth Bishop
“anything said in such a way, or put on the page in such a way, as to invite from the hearer or the reader a certain kind of attention.”  —William Safford
“the clear expression of mixed feelings.”  —W. H. Auden
“A poem should not mean but be.”  —Archibald MacLeish
“Poetry is to prose as dancing is to walking.”  —Paul Valery
5 Steps of Annotating

When annotating our classwork, complete all of these steps in the margins of the text. This is important for responding to writing without needing a guide...create your own guide to study.

1. **Circle and define any unknown words.**
   - Be sure to define words that may have multiple meanings
   - Poetry is about word choice, so not knowing one word can alter the meaning entirely
   - Think about why an author uses certain words over others

2. **Summarize each section/stanza.**
   - Check your comprehension of each individual stanza
   - Note if the stanzas flow together to tell a story, or not
   - Important for refreshing the material for the test

3. **Underline/highlight key phrases and literary devices.**
   - Note key phrases that help prove what the poem is about
   - Point out major metaphors/similes
   - Highlight other poetry terms, such as alliteration, rhyme scheme, etc...

4. **Write down questions (at least 2).**
   - Practice guessing what Mr. Randon will ask on the test
   - Ask the big questions, do not get bogged down in specifics

5. **Determine the universal theme(s).**
   - Remember that a theme cannot be one word – a full theme
   - You should always be able to support your interpretation
   - A universal theme should be a message about life that everyone can learn from
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.
Comprehension of Stopping by woods on a snow evening

Answer the following questions about the literal meaning of the poem.

Draw a picture of what is described in the poem:

On the literal level, what is going on in the poem?

On the literal level, the speaker decides to keep going because he has promises to keep. What do you supposed these promises are?

What do you think the message is on the literal level? What is the poet trying to say?
Comprehension of Stopping by woods on a snow evening (Cont...)

Answer the following questions about the **figurative** meaning of the poem.

Fill in the following table. Use the descriptions and the relationships to figure out what IDEA is represented (something NOT tangible)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Connotation</th>
<th>Descriptions from poem</th>
<th>Relationship to other objects</th>
<th>IDEA</th>
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<td>Village</td>
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<td>Woods</td>
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<td>Farmhouse</td>
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<td>Lake</td>
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<td>Promises</td>
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<td>Darkest evening of the year</td>
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<td>Miles</td>
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The big question set up by the poem is what those lovely, dark, and deep woods symbolize to the traveler. What does your group think? What has the speaker said “no” to in passing them by?

Whatever the woods stand for, what has the speaker said yes to in deciding to go on? In other words, how has he resolved his conflict?

So what is the message of this poem? What is the theme?
To Earthward
Annotate the following poem by Robert Frost.

Love at the lips was touch
As sweet as I could bear;
And once that seemed too much;
I lived on air

That crossed me from sweet things,
The flow of--was it musk
From hidden grapevine springs
Downhill at dusk?

I had the swirl and ache
From sprays of honeysuckle
That when they're gathered shake
Dew on the knuckle.

I craved strong sweets, but those
Seemed strong when I was young;
The petal of the rose
It was that stung.

Now no joy but lacks salt,
That is not dashed with pain
And weariness and fault;
I crave the stain

Of tears, the aftermark
Of almost too much love,
The sweet of bitter bark
And burning clove.

When stiff and sore and scarred
I take away my hand
From leaning on it hard
In grass and sand,

The hurt is not enough:
I long for weight and strength
To feel the earth as rough
To all my length.
Elements of Poetry

Poetry: To portray an idea using words in a unique and creative way

Sound:
Poetry depends on the sounds as well as the meanings of the words. The sound of a word can help create feeling and reinforce meaning, or create rhythm or music.

Alliteration:
Repetition of a consonant sound at the beginning of words.
Example: I'm just a singer of simple songs

Assonance:
Repetition of a vowel sound within words.
Example: rise and shine, down and out

Onomatopoeia:
Use of words that imitate sounds.
Example: whirr, creak, clunk, quack

Rhyme:
The repetition of sounds at the ends of words such as trod and plod; usually occurs at the ends of lines of poetry.

Internal Rhyme:
Rhyming that occurs within a line of poetry.
Example: the cat in the hat

Slant Rhyme:
Words that sound the same, but are not spelled the same.
Example: Rise/sky, down/found, etc…

Rhythm:
Refers to the pattern of accented and unaccented syllables in a line.

Enjambment:
The running over of a sentence or a thought from one line to another.

Imagery:
Descriptive language that appeals to one or more of the five senses

Figurative Language:
Language that describes things in a different way than imagery to create word pictures

Simile:
Comparing two unlike objects using comparative words
Example: His hands were like wild birds

Metaphor:
Direct comparison of two unlike objects
Example: Your courage was a small coal that you kept swallowing

Personification:
Giving human qualities to objects, animals or ideas
Example: A hook shot kisses the rim, hangs there, helplessly, but doesn't drop

Hyperbole:
Exaggeration is made for emphasis or humorous effect

Mood:
The feeling or atmosphere of the poem that is implied

Tone:
The attitude that the poem's style implies

Refrain:
Consists of a word or line or group of lines that is repeated regularly in a poem or song

Symbol:
A person, place or object that stand for, or represents, something beyond itself, such as an abstract idea or feeling
In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.
Deciphering Meanings of Figures of Speech

Label each example as a simile, metaphor, or personification. Interpret what the figurate language means based on the context. Use complete sentences and use the type of figure of speech in your answer.

1. The baby was like an octopus, grabbing at all the cans on the grocery store shelves.

2. As the teacher entered the room she muttered under her breath, “This class is like a three-ring circus!”

3. The giant’s steps were thunder as he ran toward Jack.

4. The pillow was a cloud when I put my head upon it after a long day.

5. I feel like a limp dishrag.

6. Those girls are like two peas in a pod.

7. The fluorescent light was the sun during our test.

8. No one invites Harold to parties because he’s a wet blanket.

9. The bar of soap was a slippery eel during the dog’s bath.

10. Ted was as nervous as a cat with a long tail in a room full of rocking chairs.

11. The dawn tiptoed across Jenny’s bedroom window sill.

12. The snow tucked Manassas in for a week long nap.

13. The leaves danced through the trees in the autumn breeze.

14. The smell of my mother’s perfume kissed my cheek after she went through the door.

15. The daffodils poking through the mulch laughed at the snow.
“Never Let You Down” by J. Ivy

Mark the poem below and identify all the poetry terms.

We are all here for a reason on a particular path
You don't need a curriculum to know that you are part of the math
Cats think I'm delirious, but I'm so damn serious
That's why I expose my soul to the globe, the world
I'm trying to make it better for these little boys and girls
I'm not just another individual, my spirit is a part of this
That's why I get spiritual, but I get my hymns from Him
So it's not me, it's He that's lyrical
I'm not a miracle, I'm a heaven-sent instrument
My rhythmatic regimen navigates melodic notes for your soul and your mental
That's why I'm instrumental
Vibrations is what I'm into
Yeah, I need my loot by rent day
But that is not what gives me the heart of Kunte Kinte
I'm trying to give us "us free" like Cinque
I can't stop, that's why I'm hot
Determination, dedication, motivation
I'm talking to you, my many inspirations
When I say I can't, let you or self down
If I were of the highest cliff, on the highest riff
And you slipped off the side and clinched on to your life in my grip
I would never, ever let you down
And when these words are found
Let it been known that God's
penmanship has been signed with a language called love
That's why my breath is felt by the deaf
And why my words are heard and confined to the ears of the blind
I, too, dream in color and in rhyme
So I guess I'm one of a kind in a full house
’Cause whenever I open my heart, my soul, or my mouth
A touch of God reigns out
Artificial amateurs, aren't at all amazing
Analytically, I assault, animate things
Broken barriers bounded by the bomb beat
Buildings are broken, basically I'm bombarding
Casually create catastrophes, casualties
Canceling cats got their canopies collapsing
detonate a dime of dank daily doin' dough
Demonstrations, Don Dada on the down low

Eatin other editors with each and every energetic

Epileptic episode, elevated etiquette
Furious fat fabulous fantastic
Flurries of funk felt feeding the fanatics
Gift got great global goods gone glorious
Getting' godly in his game with the goriest
Hit 'em high, hella height, historical
Hey holocaust hints hear 'em holler at your homeboy

Imitators idolize, I intimidate
In a instant, I'll rise in an irate state
Juiced on my jams like jheri curls jockin' j-----
Justly, it's just me, writing my journals
Kindly I'm kindling all kinds of ink on
Karate kick type brits in my kingdom
Let me live a long life, lyrically lessons is
Learned lame louses just lose to my livery

Marvel and move, many mock what I've mastered

N----- nap knowin' I'm nice naturally
Knack, never lack, make noise nationally

Operation, opposition, off, not optional
Out of sight, out of mind, wide beaming opticals

Perfected poem, powerful punchlines
Pummelling petty powder puffs in my prime

Quite quaint quotes keep quiet it's Quannum
Quarrelers ain't got a quarter of what we got uh

Really raw raps, risin' up rapidly
Riding the rushing radioactivity
Super scientific sound search sought
Silencing super fire saps that are soft
Tales ten times talented, too tough

Take that, challengers, get a tune up
Universal, unique untouched

Unadulterated, the raw uncut
Vertice lord victorious valid
Violate vibes that are vain make 'em vanished

Well would a wise wordsmith just
Weaving up words weeded up, I'm a workshift

Xerox, my X-radiation holes extra large
X-height letters, and xylophone tones

Yellow back, yak mouth, young ones yaws
Yesterday's lawn yards sell our (yawn?)

Zig zag zombies, zoomin' to the zenith
Zero in zen thoughts, overzealous rhyme zealots!
Bad Love Poetry: Sunrise My Sweet

Before I met you, the sun looked like a grape.
Now the sun looks like a mass of flames.
Speaking of flames,
Have you felt the heat of the flames
Of my love for you?
Assuming you have, did it make you uncomfortable?
If not, would you please fan those flames
With the constant reassurance that you also love me?
Although you probably don't love me,
Because nobody ever has,
I have this irrational hope that perhaps you could be the one,
To finally bring a little light to my pathetic life,
To love me for who I am,
And believe in me,
Even though I don't believe in myself,
Because I'm not actually sure if I exist
Or if I'm the figment of someone else's imagination.

Analyzing Bad Love Poetry
Let's grit our teeth for a second.

1. What makes the poetry bad?

2. If you were to give some advice to this guy on how to improve his love poetry, so he'd actually get the girl, what would it be?

3. What are the differences between Sunrise My Sweet and I Am Offering This Poem?

4. Make a list of strategies that could be used to create a perfect love poem. What would you try and do?

Now take your list and listen to “Brand New Colony” by Death Cab for Cutie...
Brand New Colony
Death Cab for Cutie

I'll be the grapes fermented
Bottled and served with the table set
In my finest suit, like a perfect gentleman

I'll be the fire escape
That's bolted to the ancient brick
Where you will sit and contemplate your day

I'll be the waterwings
That save you if you start drowning
In an open tab when your judgment is on the brink

I'll be the phonograph
That plays your favorite albums back
As you're lying there, drifting off to sleep

I'll be the platform shoes
And undo what heredity's done to you
You won't have to strain to look into my eyes

I'll be your winter coat
Buttoned and zipped straight to the throat
With the collar up so you won't catch cold

I want to take you far
From the cynics in this town
And kiss you on the mouth
We'll cut our bodies free
From the tethers of this scene
Start a brand new colony
Where everything will change
We'll give ourselves new names
(Identities erased)
The sun will heat the ground
Under our bare feet
In this brand new colony

Everything will change, oh, oh

5. Does Brand New Colony follow any of these rules? Which ones?
Sonnet 130

Annotate the following Shakespeare sonnet.

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun,
Coral is far more red, than her lips red,
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun:
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head:

I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks,
And in some perfumes is there more delight,
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know,

That music hath a far more pleasing sound:
I grant I never saw a goddess go,
My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.

And yet by heaven I think my love as rare,
As any she belied with false compare.
Sonnet 18
Annotate the following Shakespeare sonnet.

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this and this gives life to thee.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Expression</th>
<th>Original and Fresh Imagery</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The sun burned like...</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Her eyes looked like...</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My love was like...</td>
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<td>The distance between us was like...</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be creative...</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
They say the human body
Has over 50 billion white blood cells--
And I need every single one
Because you
Make me--
Sick.
You are the fish that I would throw back,
But for some reason
As opposites,
We attract!
We show our admiration in love taps,
"I Hate You!" matches,
And sarcastic wise cracks.
All the qualities of my soulmate...
You lack.
I wrote you a poem once.
I mounted and framed it.
It was perfect,
And you gave me a pat on the back
And said,
"Hey, good stuff..."
That was it.
Your attempts at being romantic
Are simply pathetic.
The last massage you gave me
Required a paramedic.
The first time you cooked me dinner
I had to pump my stomach.
And you just like picking fights.
If I say go left,
You go right.
If I say it's day,
You swear it's night.
You still think our anniversary
Is the 10th of May;
It's the 9th...
Of MARCH!
The Golden Arches
Is the closest thing to jewelry
I've ever seen from you.
For my last birthday,
You gave me a Twinkie
With one candle.
You wear socks with your sandals!
And not the short ones,
The ones that pass your ankles.
My idea of a tranquil evening,
Involves a good book
And peppermint tea.
Yours only requires your PSP.
You're a die hard Nas fan;
I like Jay-Z.
Like most Black folk and lactose products
We just always seem to disagree.
You think Angelina Jolie
Is the epitome of beauty.
I think she's overrated and her lips are crusty.
Now, I'm a country kind of gal;
You like the city life.
I'm a revolutionary woman; You think
We should all be barefoot housewives.
I remember the last time I cried...
You gently wiped my eyes,
And whispered in my ears,
"Baby...suck it up!"
And I know it's bugged,
But I still love you,
Like Whitney loves crack.
Cause for some reason as opposites,
We attract.
And truth be told,
That romantic crap usually doesn't last.
Flowers die,
And many diamonds given
May as well be cut glass,
But what matters most is that
You complement me
Like air through my lungs.
And there are over a trillion nerves
In the central nervous system...
You get on every single one.
But for some reason,
That's why I love you
No one truly understands love—attempts to define love using prose typically fail:

**Love** (luv), n., 1. a feeling of warm personal attachment 2. to have a strong liking for 3. a score of zero in tennis

Your assignment is to use poetry to accurately reflect what it means to love or to be loved. You have two options for this first poem:

**Idea 1:**
Write a love poem in which you attempt to describe the emotion of love through all of things you would "be" for your admirer.

Example:
I'll be the platform shoes,
And undo what heredity has done to you
You won't have to strain to look into my eyes

**Idea 2:**
Write a poem in which you demonstrate your knowledge of the "good" characteristics of love poetry by acknowledging all of the different characteristics of the other.

Example:
My idea of a tranquil evening,
Involves a good book
And peppermint tea.
Yours only requires your PSP.
You're a die hard Nas fan;
I like Jay-Z.
Like most Black folk and lactose products
We just always seem to disagree.

**Notes & Ideas from Class**
How to Write about Poetry

Notes on what to focus on when settling down to write your first explication of poetry.

Literal meaning
The literal meaning of a poem is what actually happens in the poem, on a purely surface level. What is the story or observation found in the poem? Is it just describing a pond during a blizzard?

Figurative meaning
This is a meaning that is more abstract and can tie into the theme. This is a concept, rather than a concrete physical description. It is the meaning behind the words.

Theme
Every piece of literature, whether it is a poem or story or song, has a theme. This is the main idea or message behind the piece. You can usually discover this by asking yourself the question, “What did the author expect me to learn from this piece?” For example, is the poem a statement about the short duration of beauty (“pluck ye rosebuds while ye may”), or might make a statement about the permanence of death.

Human Condition
A common term that surfaces again and again in the discussion of theme is the human condition. Simply put, this is a general statement on what it means to be human. Are we basically good or evil, saved or damned, honorific or cowardly, godlike beings of limitless possibility or simply small beasts stirring in our cages? A great number of poems make some sort of comment on the human condition, so it helps if you are aware of this term and use it sparingly. You can prove that the poem is a statement of the cowardly nature of humans.

Figurative Language
Not only must you be able to identify the figurative language in a poem, you must also be able to explain what the figurative language means. Then you must explain how the figurative language supports the theme of the poem.

Imagery
How does the description in the poem create a mood for the poem? How do these images help emphasize the theme. Do they draw a certain picture in the mind. Do these images link to symbols?
Symbolism

One chief way of conveying theme is through the use of symbolism, the concrete representation of an abstract concept. These objects or persons are so universal that they have a meaning in themselves, and so when they are used within a poem or piece of prose, they bring that meaning to the piece. For example, one commonly used symbol for peace is the dove, and so when one flies over a battlefield we may take this as a symbol of a ceasefire, that peace is on its way. If the dove is shot down, we may take this as a symbol of the shattering of hope for peace.

Sometimes it is more difficult to find the meaning behind certain symbols. The mention of a unicorn, an Irish freedom fighter or a mythological figure might take a little more specialized knowledge or research to discover the full significance of the poem. Look into some of the repetitive or important objects, research if necessary. The symbolism is sometimes the most important tool that a poet uses to convey a theme.

Thesis Structure

Supporting your thesis

When stating your views on anything in analysis, you must be very careful to make sure to explain yourself. This is usually done by quoting (or, if this is impossible, making reference to) a passage in the poem that illuminates your viewpoint. Then elaborate upon this passage and how it proves your stance. For example, it is not enough to define irony and then quote a line. You must show how this line is indeed ironic. This means that every quote from the poem must be followed by analysis or commentary. These quotes must then be explained in the paragraph and brought back to the thesis statement.

Quoting lines

When you quote a line from a poem, put the line number in parenthesis. When you are quoting, use a backslash (/) to indicate line breaks. For example:

"He will not see me stopping here/ To watch his woods fill up with snow." (3-4)

Notice that the backslash indicates the end of the line, and the capitalization and punctuation stay accurate from the poem. Since two lines are mentioned, both line numbers are included. If you want to analyze two parts of the poem that aren't within the same stanza you must use indicate this with (...). For example:

"The darkest evening of the year/ …lovely dark and deep"  (8, 12)

Notice that the backslash still indicates the end of the line. The …shows that something has been left out because those words are not important for this specific example. Notice that a comma separates the two line numbers so that it is clear that only those two lines, and not the lines in between, are being discussed.
since feeling is first

who pays any attention
to the syntax of things
will never wholly kiss you;
wholly to be a fool
while Spring is in the world

my blood approves,
and kisses are a better fate
than wisdom
lady i swear by all flowers. Don't cry
—the best gesture of my brain is less than
your eyelids' flutter which says

we are for each other: then
laugh, leaning back in my arms
for life's not a paragraph

And death i think is no parenthesis
“since feeling is first” comprehension questions
This is a more difficult poem to read because of its structure. e. e. cummings likes to play with sentence structure and grammar rules in order to make a statement in a poem. Answer all of these questions in complete sentences as best you can.

1. Define syntax

2. Translate this line into your own words: “since feeling is first/ who pays attention/ to the syntax of things/ will never wholly kiss you;”

3. What connotation does “Spring” have to you? What do you think of in the springtime? Can you relate this season to love?

4. What does the second stanza say about love? This is a continuation of the line “who pays attention to the syntax of things will never...”

5. What does the statement “…kisses are a better fate than wisdom” mean? What is the author saying about what is most important in life?

6. How does the author respond to the woman’s tears?

7. To what does the author compare life to?

8. What are the characteristics of a paragraph?

9. Using the answer to 7-8, what is the poet saying about life?

10. Translate this statement into your own words: “then laugh, leaning back in my arms for life’s not a paragraph”

11. What does the poet compare death to?

12. What is the purpose of parenthesis in a sentence? What do parentheses do to the flow of a sentence? What does this statement say about death?

13. The poet compares different things to paragraphs, parenthesis, and syntax. What do these three things have in common?

14. So why do you think that the poet doesn’t use punctuation, correct sentence structure, or correct capitalization?

15. What is the theme (this should be a whole sentence) of this poem?
Spring is like a perhaps hand

(which comes carefully
out of Nowhere) arranging
a window, into which people look (while
people stare
arranging and changing placing
carefully there a strange
thing and a known thing here) and

changing everything carefully

spring is like a perhaps
Hand in a window
(carefully to
and fro moving New and
Old things, while
people stare carefully
moving a perhaps
fraction of flower here placing
an inch of air there) and

without breaking anything.
Making Structure Mean Something

Follow the directions below.

1. Flip to any page in the dictionary.
2. Choose one word with several definitions, one that appeals to you.
3. Write the word as the title of your poem.
4. In the dictionary, rank the definitions with number one as the most interesting, etc.
5. Write the definitions in the order you have chosen.

Word/title: ________________________

Definition #1:
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

Definition #2:
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

Definition #3:
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

Definition #4:
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
Adding Meaning Through Structure

At this point, all you have is a rank-order list of definitions. The next step is to evolve the list into a poem. This requires a poetic leap!

Try some of the following:
- Subtract repetitive words, such as excessive articles
- Substitute synonyms for words that are awkward or colorless
- Add linking words and/or punctuation for effect
- Add descriptive words
- Subtract definitions that no longer fit the total meaning
- Think about connotation (the emotion/feeling we associate with a word)
- Consider the overall tone of the poem
- Could the shape add meaning?
- Consider capitalization, punctuation, line breaks, stanza breaks that might add meaning

Write your structure poem on a separate sheet of paper.

Examples

Habit

A thing done often.
Condition. Disposition.
A thing done often.
Tendency to perform a certain action.
A thing done often.
Action of mind or body.
A thing done often.
Done easily. Difficult to break.
A thing done often.
Enforced by social disapproval.
A thing . . .

Error

blundER, mistake,, slip
deviation of behavioR from truth Or accuRacy
dEpaRture fROm what is
correc
Auto Wreck
Annotate the following poem by Karl Shapiro.

Its quick soft silver bell beating, beating,
And down the dark one ruby flare
Pulsing out red light like an artery,
The ambulance at top speed floating down
Past beacons and illuminated clocks
Wings in a heavy curve, dips down,
And brakes speed, entering the crowd.
The doors leap open, emptying light;
Stretchers are laid out, the mangled lifted
And stowed into the little hospital.
Then the bell, breaking the hush, tolls once,
And the ambulance with its terrible cargo
Rocking, slightly rocking, moves away,
As the doors, and afterthought, are closed.

We are deranged, walking among the cops
Who sweep glass and are large and composed.
One is still making notes under the light.
One with a bucket douches ponds of blood
Into the street and gutter.
One hangs lanterns on the wrecks that cling,
Empty husks of locusts, to iron poles.

Our throats were tight as tourniquets,
Our feet were bound with splints, but now,
Like convalescents intimate and gauche,
We speak through sickly smiles and warn
With the stubborn saw of common sense,
The grim joke and the banal resolution.
The traffic moves around with care,
But we remain, touching a wound
That opens to our richest horror.
Already old, the question Who shall die?
Becomes unspoken Who is innocent?
For death in war is done by hands;
Suicide has cause and stillbirth, logic;
And cancer, simple as a flower, blooms.
But this invites the occult mind,
 Cancels our physics with a sneer,
And spatters all we knew of denouement
Across the expedient and wicked stones.
Courage
Annotate the following poem by Anne Sexton.

It is in the small things we see it.
The child’s first step,
as awesome as an earthquake.
The first time you rode a bike,
wallowing up the sidewalk.
The first spanking when your heart
went on a journey all alone.
When they called you crybaby
or poor or fatty or crazy
and made you into an alien,
you drank their acid
and concealed it.

Later,
if you faced the death of bombs and bullets
you did not do it with a banner,
you did it with only a hat to
cover your heart.
You did not fondle the weakness inside you
though it was there.
Your courage was a small coal
that you kept swallowing.
If your buddy saved you
and died himself in so doing,
then his courage was not courage,
it was love; love as simple as shaving soap.

Later,
if you have endured a great despair,
then you did it alone,
getting a transfusion from the fire,
picking the scabs off your heart,
then wringing it out like a sock.
Next, my kinsman, you powdered your sorrow,
you gave it a back rub
and then you covered it with a blanket
and after it had slept a while
it woke to the wings of the roses
and was transformed.

Later,
when you face old age and its natural conclusion
your courage will still be shown in the little ways,
each spring will be a sword you’ll sharpen,
those you love will live in a fever of love,
and you’ll bargain with the calendar
and at the last moment
when death opens the back door
you’ll put on your carpet slippers
and stride out.
Comprehension of “Courage”

Answering the following questions on Anne Sexton’s poem.

1. How does the metaphor of the alien in line 10 help you see a hurt child?

2. In line 15, Sexton refers to a banner. What does banner usually mean?

3. So what might it mean to face death not “with a banner” but with “only a hat to cover your heart”?

4. Referring to line 42, why would an old person’s love ones live in “a fever of love”?

5. In what acts does the speaker see courage in childhood? How are these acts “small”?

6. The last three stanzas begin with the word later. What progression does each stanza represent?

7. Describe the acts of courage in stanza three. What is the common theme of this stanza?

8. List the figures of speech in the first stanza. Which comparisons make these small acts seem large and heroic?

9. What unusual comparisons can you find in lines 20, 30, and 31? Do you think they all “work”? Do you understand them? Why or why not?

10. How does the speaker personify sorrow in lines 32-37? What seems to transform sorrow in the poem? Do you think this is true to life?

11. What is the theme of this poem?
Tony Steinberg: Brave Seventh Grade Viking Warrior

By Taylor Mali

Have you ever seen a Viking ship made out of popsicle sticks
And balsa wood? With tiny coils of brown thread for ropes,
Sixteen oars made out of chopsticks, and a red and yellow sail
made from a baby's footie pajamas?

I have.

He died with his sword in his hand and so went straight to heaven.

The Vikings sometimes buried their bravest warriors in ships.
Or set them adrift and on fire, a floating island of flames.
The soul of the brave warrior rising slowly with the smoke.
To understand life in Scandinavia in the Middle Ages,
You must understand the Viking ship.

So here is the assignment:
The class must build me a miniature Viking ship.
You have a month. And you must all work together.
Like warriors.

These projects are what I'm known for as a teacher.
Like the Egyptian Pyramid Project.
Have you ever seen a family of four standing around a card table after dinner,
each one holding one triangular side of a miniature pyramid until the glue dried?
I haven't either, but Mrs. Steinberg said it took 90 minutes,
and even with the little brother on one side saying,
This is dumb! This is a stupid pyramid, Tony!
You're going to fail this project.
If I get Mr. Mali next year, my pyramid is going to be much better than this!
And Tony on the other side saying,
Shut up! Shut up! You little %$@
No, no, no, no, no, no! Keep holding your side
or I swear I'll kill you after the glue dries!
It was the best family time they'd spent together since Christmas.

He died with his sword in his hand and so went straight to heaven,
which the Vikings called Valhalla.

Mr. Mali, if that's true, that you would go straight to Valhalla
if you died with your sword in your hand,
then if you were an old Viking
and you were about to die of old age,
could you keep your sword right by your bed
so if you felt like you were going to die
you could reach out and grab it?

I don't know if their gods would fall for that,
but it sounds like a good idea to me.

Tony was out for a month before we heard what was wrong.
And the 12 boys left whispered the name of the disease
as if you could catch it from saying it too loud.

We'd been warned. The Middle School Head had come to class
And said Tony was coming to school on Friday.
But he's had a rough time.
The medication he's taking has made all his hair fall out,
and he's a little shy about it.
So don't stare, don't point, don't laugh.
I always said I liked teaching in a private school
Because I could talk about God
And not be breaking the law.
And for an Episcopalian kid who only went to church
On Christmas and Easter, I sure talked about God a lot.
In history of course, that's easy,
Even the Egyptian Pyramid Project is essentially a spiritual exercise.
But how can you study geometry and not believe in a God?

A God of perfect points and planes,
Surrounded by angels and angles of all different degrees.
Such a God wouldn't give cancer to a seventh grade boy.
Wouldn't make his hair fall out from the chemo.
Totally bald in a jacket and tie on Friday morning.
And I don't mean Tony. Not one single boy in my class had hair;
the other 12 had shaved their heads in solidarity.
Have you ever seen 13 bald-headed seventh grade boys,
all pointing at each other, all staring, all laughing?

I have.

It's a beautiful sight. And almost as striking as 12 boys
six weeks later, now with crew cuts on a Saturday morning,
outside the synagogue with heads bowed,
holding hands and standing in a circle
around the smoldering remains
of a miniature Viking ship,
the soul of the brave warrior
rising slowly with the smoke.

1. Another simple question: What does this poem mean to you? And, how do you know?

2. Comparing this poem with “Auto Wreck,” what similar themes can you find? Differences?

3. What is similar about the structure of these two poems? Why do you think the poets used this structure to convey their message?
All
by Bei Dao

All is fated,
all cloudy,
all an endless beginning,
all a search for what vanishes,
all joys grave,
all griefs tearless,
every speech a repetition,
every meeting a first encounter,
all love buried in the heart,
all history imprisoned in a dream,
all hope hedged with doubt,
all faith drowned in lamentation.

Every explosion heralds an instant of stillness,
every death reverberates forever.

Also All
by Shu Ting

Not all trees are felled by storms.
Not every seed finds barren soil.
Not all the wings of dream are broken,
Nor is all affection doomed
to wither in a desolate heart.

No, not all is as you say.

Not all flames consume themselves
shedding no light on other lives.
Not all starts announce the night
and never dawn. Not every song
will drift past every ear and heart.

No, not all is as you say.

Not every cry for help is silenced,
nor every loss beyond recall.
Not every chasm spells disaster.
Not only the weak will be brought to their knees,
nor every soul be trodden under.

It won’t all end in tears and blood.
Today is heavy with tomorrow—
the future was planted yesterday.
Hope is a burden all of us shoulder.
though we might stumble under the load.

1. What does Dao say all is “a search for?” What does that mean?

2. What mood is created in the first poem? How do you know?

3. What does Ting say about trees? What does this mean?

4. Why do you think Ting felt the need to respond to Dao?

5. Identify the tone in each poem. How does that correspond with their themes?
I stand at the edge of water,
the bandage wrapping my instep
soaked and raveling off,

like the feverish warmth of sleep.
I could’ve dreamt a sailboat—
luminous, its newness

come back—fluttering, caught
in the cattails; or my brothers
in a shirr of skate-blades,

clatter of hockey sticks,
and wandered out…

The town
ends where this path began—

in silent frog-marsh, fencewires
sunk through years of grass—
a mild, wet wilderness.

The shore is slithering rushes.
There is no other side.
And here or there, the surface

shivers to the touch
of no wind I can feel…
I know the pond is gone,

the fields are gone, the scar
almost invisible
but the line of distant oaks

beyond the slopes of pasture
silvers now. I watch
the sharpening light of late March

wash through the river hills,
I stare at the whirling ash
of stars, at everything

so dim—for in these waters
of my first memory,
it is still five a.m.
Slam Poetry

An introduction to the Slam Poetry genre.

Poetry is simply a genre. Poetry Slam is a form of poetry that invites all different styles and techniques. Any poem that works in a performance setting is considered a slam poem. This could mean anything from a very quiet, personal piece that the audience can connect with to a piece ending with the poet releasing an ear-piercing howl. There is no limit to what slam poems can be. The definition of slam poetry is unlimited because the definition of poetry itself is unlimited. A poem is any piece of writing that has rhythm and spirit. This translates exactly into the style of poetry slam. This genre allows the spirit to come off the page and connect with its audience at a different level.

Poetry slam also welcomes experimentation. A common technique used by slam poets is to sing during a section of the poem. Usually, they sing a song that everyone is familiar with, but sometimes they make up their own short verse. The beauty of this is that no one judges a poet on how well he or she sings. Sometimes the poets will get the audience involved in their poem. The poet will encourage the audience to react to certain parts of the poem as part of their presentation. A poet may give the audience a line to repeat over and over again. While the audience recites this line, the poet performs his poem over the audience's chanting. New techniques are continually being invented. This will keep the audience guessing, so when people go to a poetry slam, they need to be prepared for anything.

Technique is not the only thing open for experimentation in slam poetry. The content of a poem is also often experimental. Some themes are very unusual and bizarre. Poems can be about math, mayonnaise, rubber ducks, nature, snake charmers, cats, orange juice, God's dog, and hip hop style verses about trees. Some of the most effective slam poems use the most unusual images and concepts. The ability poets have to play with every part of their poem is what makes the genre so unique and extraordinary.

One thing a poet must always pay attention to in poetry slam is the roots of this genre. Sometimes the genre tends to have a little more slam than poetry. As a slam poet, it is crucial never to lose sight that slam poetry still relies on the poetic aspect. Poetry is an art form. Someone cannot just come up with a great poem in a matter of an hour. This is also true with slam poetry. In a great slam poem, the first draft should never be the last. Usually it takes dozens of revisions to finally have a poem worthy of performing over and over again. It is important to pay attention to every little detail in the poem and nothing should be overlooked. Poetry is no different from music or painting in terms of being artistic. The only difference between poetry and poetry slam is that poetry slam is meant for a performance setting. This does not mean that it can't still work on paper. The ideal slam poem should be able to score perfect tens at a national competition and be published in the world's most respected literary magazine. The chances of this ever occurring are very slim, but this is always the goal that a slam poet wishes to achieve.
He may never know
that there are fireflies
growing inside him.
Wings threatening to sprout from his spine
if he would merely reach toward the heavens
my father
is no hero.
He’s a postal worker.
A Vietnam vet
with a Jim Crow education
six children
and enough regrets to fill a casket with
sometimes sleeps with his eyes open
as if he’s looking for 3 AM redemption
from whatever insomniac angels
may be still watching over his body
and with all his flaws
I still love him
with every bit
of the jigsaw puzzle heart
that pumps life through this thin frame
the exact same blood
that runs through my daddy’s veins
because no matter
how many miles I put between us
the undeniable truth remains
that I’m a carbon copy of my father
exactly 5 foot 10
170 pounds with not a muscle in sight
love to pretend
that we’re really good at basketball
and have this amazing ability
to emotionally damage
the people we care about most.
Take my mother for instance
the woman who gave me life
and the person my dad
and I owe the biggest apology to
for our unwillingness to be vulnerable.
Mom, I’m sorry
for being so ungrateful.
for not being satisfied
with the fact that most times
it was only you in the audience at performances
and watching me on the sidelines
But if growing up as a Black man in America
has taught me anything
it’s that there is nothing more dangerous
than telling another man
you care about him
so at this moment
right now
I’m choosing to murder the
monster that hides inside me
the one that keeps me from crying when I need to
and telling my little brother I love you
Dad
no matter what this world may say
you are an inspiration
a poetic painter on par with Pollock
turned being a mailman
into a metaphor
because for as long as I can remember
for 10 hours a day
every single week
he would sling a 100-pound sack of mail
over his shoulders
carry the hopes and dreams
of the masses
on his back
like a 60 year-old Atlas with
an Alabama accent
and though he may not know it
there’s not much difference
between the work he does every night
and the way I write poems
see my hands turn into carrier pigeons
when I pick up a pen
allowing my words to rocket through
the air like I was on a first name basis with the wind
and so as I long its cool with my dad
I’ll continue to believe that
the lights I write to every night
are coming from within him
the fireflies on his insides
the sunbeams that gleam
from his gut
as a constant reminder
that my father will never die
even when we forget to act like family
and he doesn’t have the insight
to see
that I’m the only 19-year old
I know who still wants to grow up
to be just like his Dad
that I’m fully aware
that no one else could possibly bear
the weight of my Earth-sized
insecurities the way that he can
and even when no one else gets him
his second- youngest son understands
that life ain’t easy
when you come from war
with a purple heart fastened to your chest
and a shattered one behind the seams
when you come home from war
and post office realities
are spawned as
the bastard children of your
law school dreams
I know what you sacrificed for me
and I promise
that I’ll use this God-given gift
to repay you one day
but for right now
Let go.
no one’s watching
it’s o.k. to be broken sometimes
let the lightning bugs loose
so I can illuminate the path for my children
and provide them with undeniable proof
that they are the descendants of a man
who held the stars in his stomach
could crumble a mountain with his smile
and spoke truth to his son
as if the entire world
were watching.
Totally like whatever, you know?
By Taylor Mali

In case you hadn’t noticed,
it has somehow become uncool
to sound like you know what you’re talking about?
Or believe strongly in what you’re saying?
Invisible question marks and parenthetical (you know?)’s
have been attaching themselves to the ends of our sentences?
Even when those sentences aren’t, like, questions? You know?

Declarative sentences—so-called
because they used to, like, DECLARE things to be true, okay,
as opposed to other things are, like, totally, you know, not—
have been infected by a totally hip
and tragically cool interrogative tone? You know?
Like, don’t think I’m uncool just because I’ve noticed this;
this is just like the word on the street, you know?
It’s like what I’ve heard?
I have nothing personally invested in my own opinions, okay?
I’m just inviting you to join me in my uncertainty?

What has happened to our conviction?
Where are the limbs out on which we once walked?
Have they been, like, chopped down
with the rest of the rain forest?
Or do we have, like, nothing to say?
Has society become so, like, totally . . .
I mean absolutely . . . You know?
That we’ve just gotten to the point where it’s just, like . . .
whatever!

And so actually our disarticulation . . . ness
is just a clever sort of . . . thing
to disguise the fact that we’ve become
the most aggressively inarticulate generation
to come along since . . .
you know, a long, long time ago!

I entreat you, I implore you, I exhort you,
I challenge you: To speak with conviction.

To say what you believe in a manner that bespeaks
the determination with which you believe it.
Because contrary to the wisdom of the bumper sticker,
it is not enough these days to simply QUESTION AUTHORITY.
You have to speak with it, too.
Louder than a Bomb Guide

Every year, more than six hundred teenagers from over sixty Chicago area schools gather for the world’s largest youth poetry slam, a competition known as “Louder Than a Bomb”. Founded in 2001, Louder Than a Bomb is the only event of its kind in the country—a youth poetry slam built from the beginning around teams. Rather than emphasize individual poets and performances, the structure of Louder Than a Bomb demands that kids work collaboratively with their peers, presenting, critiquing, and rewriting their pieces. To succeed, teams have to create an environment of mutual trust and support. For many kids, being a part of such an environment—in an academic context—is life-changing.

LOUDER THAN A BOMB chronicles the stereotype-confounding stories of four teams as they prepare for and compete in the 2008 event. By turns hopeful and heartbreaking, the film captures the tempestuous lives of these unforgettable kids, exploring the ways writing shapes their world, and vice versa. This is not "high school poetry" as we often think of it. This is language as a joyful release, irrepressibly talented teenagers obsessed with making words dance. How and why they do it—and the community they create along the way—is the story at the heart of this inspiring film.

As you watch the documentary, pay close attention the power of the individual voice; how do the poets make sure the poems reflect them? How do their pieces reflect their individual experiences?

After the first half of the film, think about to moments that you found particularly powerful. What made them powerful? What stands out to you? Why do you think you were moved by these moments/words?

What made the poems presented in the film so powerful? Would they have been as effective if they hadn’t been spoken aloud?

What makes a slam poetry performance effective? Use specific examples to support.

Do you think the teenagers in the video needed to have a hard life to write such great poetry? Has the students’ background/life have given them power to write these poems?

“The point is not the points. The point is the poetry.” This is a quotation that comes up a lot in the film and is very applicable in a student’s life. How is this applicable in our own and does this have a deeper meaning? If so, what?

The idea of a team being a “family” came up quite a bit in the video. Why was this important? Does it affect each poet?

Think about the messages these students were trying to pass on. What would you write about?

Describe the atmosphere at the competition. Was this a traditional demonstration of competition? What made it so successful?
Slam Poetry: Concrete vs. Abstract Language

Basic to all good writing is concrete language, or words or phrases that project on the minds of the audience vivid images, sounds, actions, and other sensations. If your text is rich with imagery your audience will see, smell, and taste what you’re telling them.

Here is an excerpt from Lisa Buscani, a National Slam champion who is good at using concrete language:

And I thought of my brother down at the Popsicle factory, putting his hand on the guardrail as a two-ton punch press whistled millimeters from his fingers.
~from “Sirens at the Mill”

Here is the same excerpt revised to be in more abstract language:

And I thought of industrialization, Subjecting its workers to possible disfigurement As they worked near machines on the assembly line.

Abstract language is the stuff humans have created in their brains to generalize the world and human behavior. Words like “greed,” “intelligence,” “universal,” and “thinking” are abstract words. We know what they mean, sort of, but can you smell intelligence? Can you touch thinking? When was the last time you tried to taste greed?

Exercise: As we watch the clips for slam poets, identify at least 3 examples of concrete language.

Poet:
Example:

Poet:
Example:

Poet:
Example:
Slam Poetry Assignment

For your last writing assignment of the year, your only “real” requirement is that the poem should be at least 20 lines. Everything else is up to you! There are a few options:

TBA 😊