

Poems for Poetry Analysis

Remember, you only need to annotate 6 of the 9 poems provided.

Thinking Notes:


- ✓ Main idea - central to the author's message
- ♥ I love this part! Great imagery or technique
- ? Raises a question - possible discussion point
- ☹ Something is unclear or confusing to me - I need to ask about this on the discussion board
- 🎯 Relates to one of the essential questions



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Another way to Annotate

- speaker - stage of life
- message (EQ language)
- key images
- figurative language
- techniques
- lessons learned



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If you want to use the thinking notes icons, simply click the icon and CTRL+C to copy and then CTRL+V to paste; you will have to move them and re-size them to fit the area of the poem.



[Review this exemplar for an approach to annotating poetry.](#)

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Acquainted with the Night by Robert Frost

I have been one acquainted with the night.
I have walked out in the rain--and back in the rain.
I have outwalked the furthest city light.

I have looked down the saddest city lane.
I have passed by the watchman on his beat
And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.

I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet
When far away an interrupted cry
Came over houses from another street,

But not to call me back or say good-by;
And further still at an unearthly height,
One luminary clock against the sky

Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right.
I have been one acquainted with the night.

Calgary 2 a.m. by Christopher Wiseman

In spite of the fact that it's twenty below
and winter has gone on for five long months,

in spite of being starved, starved almost to death
for greenness and warmth, flowers and birds,

in spite of the deadness of endless classrooms,
shopping centres, television shows,

in spite of the pains in the gut, the migraines,
the wakings, the palpitations,

in spite of a guilty knowledge of laziness,
of failure to meet some obligations,

in spite of all these things, and more,
I have to report that the moon tonight

is filling the house with a wild blueness,
my children grow, excel, are healthy,

my wife is gentle, there are friends,
and once in a while a poem will come.

in spite of the fact that it's twenty below,
tonight I smile. Summer bursts inside me.

Circular Saws by Fred Cogswell

When the circular saw
chewed up my fingernail
I said to myself
“This is a bad dream
and I shall wake up”
but I didn't
and in a few minutes
the pain began

after that, I had
a scar to remind me
not to go
near circular saws

but I soon found
they had ways
of disguising themselves
so that watch as I might
they were always
hurting me

now inside and out
I am covered with scars
but that is not
the worst I've learned
the worst thing is
that under the masks
I wear and without
intending to be
I am a circular saw

First Practice by Gary Gildner

After the doctor checked to see
we weren't ruptured,
the man with the short cigar took us
under the grade school,
where we went in case of attack
or storm, and said
he was Clifford Hill, he was
a man who believed dogs
ate dogs, he had once killed
for his country, and if
there were any girls present
for them to leave now.

No one
left. OK, he said, he said I take
that to mean you are hungry
men who hate to lose as much
as I do. OK. Then
he made 2 lines of us
facing each other,
and across the way, he said,
is the man you hate most
in the world,
and if we are to win
that title I want to see how.
But I don't want to see
any marks when you're dressed,
he said. He said, *Now*.

In School-days by John Greenleaf Whittier

Still sits the school-house by the road,
A ragged beggar sleeping;
Around it still the sumachs grow,
And blackberry-vines are creeping.

Within, the master's desk is seen,
Deep scarred by raps official;
The warping floor, the battered seats,
The jack-knife's carved initial;

The charcoal frescoes on its wall;
Its door's worn sill, betraying
The feet that, creeping slow to school,
Went storming out to playing!

Long years ago a winter sun
Shone over it at setting;
Lit up its western window-panes,
And low eaves' icy fretting.

It touched the tangled golden curls,
And brown eyes full of grieving,
Of one who still her steps delayed
When all the school were leaving.

For near her stood the little boy
Her childish favor singled:
His cap pulled low upon a face
Where pride and shame were mingled.

Pushing with restless feet the snow
To right and left, he lingered;—
As restlessly her tiny hands
The blue-checked apron fingered.

He saw her lift her eyes; he felt
The soft hand's light caressing,
And heard the tremble of her voice,
As if a fault confessing.

"I'm sorry that I spelt the word:
I hate to go above you,
Because," —the brown eyes lower fell,—
"Because, you see, I love you!"

Still memory to a gray-haired man
That sweet child-face is showing.
Dear girl! the grasses on her grave
Have forty years been growing!

He lives to learn, in life's hard school,
How few who pass above him
Lament their triumph and his loss,
Like her, because they love him.

On the Value of Fantasies by Elizabeth Brewster

The teacher on the morning radio program
disapproves because her girl students
have such unrealistic fantasies.
They all think they will go to college,
marry a lawyer or a professor,
have two kids and two cars,
and live happily ever after.

And she gets them to play a game
in which Linda becomes a widow at fifty,
Paulette is deserted at thirty-five
and has to bring up four kids
on a steno's salary¹, and poor Jennifer
never marries at all.
How will they cope?

Of course it's a matter of
one fantasy against another;
and sometimes it's fun
to imagine oneself bearing up against adversity.

Myself, though, I agree with the kids
that it's rather a dumb game.
It's true, life is full of these dirty tricks,
but being prepared for the worst may make it happen.

(More might be said
for fantasizing about space travel
or maybe about being a mermaid.)

I still hope (two months before my fifty-third birthday)
that I may yet meet that handsome stranger
all the fortunetellers have told me about;
that sometime my lottery ticket
will win a tax-free fortune,
and that my poems become household words
and make the next edition of Colombo's *Quotations*².

I might as well believe in heaven, too,
for all the good it will do me to admit
statistics are against it.

¹**steno's salary**: stenographer's; a stenographer transcribes speech using shorthand writing

² **Colombo's *Quotations***: a reference work containing quotations by notable Canadians, edited by John Robert Colombo.

The Layers by Stanley Kunitz

I have walked through many lives,
some of them my own,
and I am not who I was,
though some principle of being
abides, from which I struggle
not to stray.

When I look behind,
as I am compelled to look
before I can gather strength
to proceed on my journey,
I see the milestones dwindling
toward the horizon
and the slow fires trailing
from the abandoned camp-sites,
over which scavenger angels
wheel on heavy wings.

Oh, I have made myself a tribe
out of my true affections,
and my tribe is scattered!
How shall the heart be reconciled
to its feast of losses?

In a rising wind
the manic dust of my friends,
those who fell along the way,
bitterly stings my face.

Yet I turn, I turn,
exulting somewhat,
with my will intact to go
wherever I need to go,
and every stone on the road
precious to me.

In my darkest night,
when the moon was covered
and I roamed through wreckage,
a nimbus-clouded voice
directed me:

“Live in the layers,
not in the litter.”

Though I lack the art
to decipher it,
no doubt the next chapter
in my book of transformations
is already written.
I am not done with my changes.

To Be of Use by Marge Piercy

The people I love the best
jump into work head first
without dallying in the shallows
and swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.
They seem to become natives of that element,
the black sleek heads of seals
bouncing like half-submerged balls.

I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,
who do what has to be done, again and again.

I want to be with people who submerge
in the task, who go into the fields to harvest
and work in a row and pass the bags along,
who are not parlor generals³ and field deserters⁴
but move in a common rhythm
when the food must come in or the fire be put out.

The work of the world is common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.
Greek amphoras⁵ for wine or oil,
Hopi⁶ vases that held corn, are put in museums
but you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
and a person for work that is real.

³ **parlor generals:** generals who avoid the battlefield

⁴ **field deserters:** soldiers who flee during battle

⁵ **amphoras:** two-handled jars

⁶ **Hopi:** Aboriginal people of northeast Arizona

Young Soul by Amiri Baraka (LeRoi James)

First, feel, then feel, then
read, or read, then feel, then
fall, or stand, where you
already are. Think
of your self, and the other
selves... think
of your parents, your mothers
and sisters, your bentslick
father, then feel, or
fall, on your knees
if nothing else will move you,

then read
and look deeply
into all matters
come close to you
city boys —
country men

Make some muscle
in your head, but
use the muscle
in yr heart

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