

Name: _____

Analyzing Poetry for Symbols

Complete the questions below to guide you through the process of analyzing poetry for symbolism.

1. Read the poem from start to finish without stopping. Underneath the poem, write down your first impressions. What do you think the poem is about? What emotions does it evoke?
2. Read the poem again, but this time underline any words you don't understand. Look those words up in a dictionary and write the definitions next to the term.
3. Circle any words in the poem that you think could be symbols. Remember, a **symbol** is something that stands for something else. Symbols are usually nouns and verbs, but can sometimes be adjectives.

Now that you've found some words to focus on, answer the following questions to figure out what the symbol may mean:

- Does the word remind you of or is associated with certain emotions? Which emotions, and why?
- Does the word remind you of a different story or historical event? Which stories or events, and why?
- Does the word remind you of a fictional character? What do you know about that fictional character, and why might the poet want you to think of them?

Once you've asked yourself these questions, determine which of your answers make the most sense in the context of the rest of the poem. There may be more than one symbol in a poem, so think about how the symbols may fit together.

Finally, reread the poem for the third time. Now that you've thought critically about the potential symbolism, write down what you think the poem means. Does it match your original interpretation? Why or why not?