Introduction to Poetry

Speaker, Tone, Diction, and Imagery

Poetic Language

Poetic Language is different from regular prose in that it is used in a condensed or compressed form to convey emotion or ideas to the reader's or listener's mind or ear.

When analyzing poetic language, focus on:

✓ Speaker

✓ Tone

✓ Diction

✓ Imagery

Speaker

All poems have a voice—called a **speaker**.

✓ Who "tells" the poem? What can you can say about the speaker's personality, point of view, tone, society, age, or gender?

✓ Does the speaker assume a persona at any point in the poem, and speak "as" a particular person

✓ Does the speaker seem attached or detached from what is said?

✓ What effect do the speaker's characteristics have on the poem?

Tone

Tone is the attitude of the speaker toward the subject(s) in a piece.

Ask yourself:

✓ What is the attitude taken by the "voice" of the piece?

✓ Is the tone serious, ironic, amorous, argumentative, distant, intimate, somber, abrupt, playful, cheerful, despondent, conversational, yearning, etc.

✓ Tone can shift throughout a piece.

Diction

Diction is the writer's word choice in a piece.

- ✓ Be sure to describe the diction used with some sort of an adjective.
- ✓ The writer uses aggressive, urgent, childish, etc. diction to express…
- ✓ Diction informs tone. Use specific examples of diction to support your choice of tone.

Imagery

The description of a person, place, or thing, by appealing to one or more of the five senses.

✓ Imagery is the name given to the elements in a poem that spark off the senses.

✓ Though "image" is a synonym for "picture", images aren't only visual; any of the five senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell) can be an image.

Purpose and Effect

Always consider:

- ✓ the PURPOSE of the device used
- ✓ the EFFECT of the device used

This will inform your analysis of any type of writing with which you are working.

Day ONE Task:

In your groups, select two vignettes and analyze the following for each:

- ✓ Speaker
- ✓ Tone
- ✓ Diction
- ✓ Imagery

	Vignette title	Vignette title
Speaker		
Tone		
Diction		
Imagery		

Intro to Poetry

Poetic Language in *The House on Mango Street*

Day TWO task, Vignette: "Hairs"

Poetic Language (quotes)	Effect on reader
"hair like a broom, all up in the air"; "my hair is lazy"; "slippery—slides out of your hand"	• Tactile images—reader can imagine how stiff the bristles of a broom feel, lazy hair that lays flat and feels heavy, slippery, silky feeling smooth hair that looks shiny.
"is the warm smell of bread before you bake it"	• Appeals to reader's olfactory senses • Reminisce about a time when a smell created a sense of comfort—baking cookies, Thanksgiving morning, etc.
"When she is holding you, holding you and you feel safe, is the warm smell of bread before you bake it"	• Reminds reader of feeling close to a personal caregiver. • Hugs, warmth, and peace—appeals to reader's sense of safety and security.

Example from "Hairs"

Esperanza is a young girl here and her childlike way of describing her family members reinforces the peaceful tone of the vignette. Esperanza's sense of security is evident when her mother is "holding [her] and [she] feels safe" (Cisneros 6).

Analysis of poetic language in vignette:

Esperanza's choice to describe her family members by the type of hair they have is a childlike choice. Instead of describing personality traits, responsibilities in the family, etc., Esperanza focuses on how each family member looks. This reinforces her young age and simple understanding of her family unit at the time. Words and images such as "slippery," "like a broom," and "like candy circles" (6) are examples of descriptions a young child would use to describe her family members' hair.