The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost

Analyzing Poetry

• The more we read it, the more we realize that poetry usually involves some deeper meaning.

• In order to know what this deeper meaning is, we must know what we are looking for.

• We generally look for things like the following:

Figures of Speech

• Figures of speech are used to make ordinary language more effective to the reader.

• They are not necessarily logical, but they appeal to the reader’s imagination.

• They include:

Metaphor

• a figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily means one thing is used to describe (or compare) something else that wouldn’t ordinarily have that quality.

• This description does not compare the things using the words “like” or “as”.

Metaphor

All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women
merely players
They have their exits and their entrances.

William Shakespeare
Simile

- A figure of speech which compares two things (like a metaphor does) using the words “like” or “as” in its description (which metaphors don’t do).

- If a poet compares two things that don’t usually belong together and doesn’t use the words “like” or “as”, then he or she is using a metaphor, not a simile.

Remember:

- Keep in mind that metaphors and similes, on the surface, do not seem to make sense.

- In fact, they should appear illogical to the reader. You must analyze the poem to find its true meaning.

Personification

- The giving of human characteristics to something that is non-human.

- Remember the old nursery rhyme – The Cat and the Fiddle?

The Cat & The Fiddle

Hey diddle, Diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon;
The little dog laughed
To see such sport,
And the dish ran away with the spoon.

Mother Goose
Apostrophe

• someone absent or dead, or something non-human is addressed as if it were human, present, alive, and could respond.

• Remember – in apostrophe – the speaker of the poem must speak directly to the subject.

Apostrophe Examples:

For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar’s angel.
Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him.
- Shakespeare

O World, I cannot hold thee close enough!/Thy winds, thy wide grey skies!/Thy mists that roll and rise!
- Edna St Vincent Millay

Verbal Irony

• Stating the opposite of what is actually meant.
  – Saying ‘Oh Great’ after you fail a test.

• There is a difference between what the speaker says and what is actually understood.

• Verbal irony refers to spoken words only.

Verbal Irony

• In Julius Caesar, Mark Antony repeats the words “and Brutus is an honorable man” in the famous “Friends, Romans, countrymen” speech.

• Mark Antony’s meaning, however, is that Brutus is completely dishonorable because Brutus, Caesar’s best friend, joined the other conspirators and plunged a knife into Caesar’s chest.

• Note: Verbal irony may be confused with sarcasm, but sarcasm is harsh and direct, while verbal irony is implied (more subtle).
Paradox

• a statement whose two parts seem contradictory yet make sense with more thought.
  – In the Bible, Christ used paradox in his teaching: They have ears but hear not
  – In ordinary conversation, we might use a paradox, Deep down he's really very shallow
• Somehow, the statement seems true and false at the same time.

When you increase your knowledge, you see how little you know. You see how much you still have to learn. When you really know a lot, you can say: I know that I know nothing.

I was so much older then, I'm younger than that now.
Bob Dylan

Oxymoron

• a paradox in which successive words (ones that come one after another) seem to contradict one another.

Not to be Confused with moron:

Hyperbole

• an overstatement; saying more than is actually meant to be said.

• It may be used due to strong feelings or is used to create a strong impression and is not meant to be taken literally.

• It gives greater emphasis.
It's a slow burg—I spent a couple of weeks there one day.  
—Carl Sandburg,  
"The People, Yes"

This poem uses hyperbole in a description of a young boy.  
Why does a boy who’s fast as a jet  
Take all day—and sometimes two—  
To get to school?  
—John Ciardi, "Speed Adjustments"

Hyperbole can emphasize a truth by exaggerating it.  
Here once the embattled farmers stood  
And fired the shot heard round the world.  
—Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Concord Hymn"

### Alliteration

- successive words which all begin with the same letter.

- Alliteration is one of the poet’s most important sound techniques. It makes particular words stand out.

- It also connects the words to be emphasized.

- Tongue twisters are great examples of alliteration.
Images & Imagery

The Poetry of the Mind

In simple terms, an image is a representation of what you think is occurring (an object or a scene) when you read a poem.

In English, an image is used to describe the pictures you get in your mind while reading poetry or prose.

For example, a poet may write: ‘love’s winged chariot’. In this case, a winged chariot gives the reader an image of a fast vehicle, meaning that love is happening quickly.

Images are word pictures and they work best as methods of association.

For example, reading the word ‘red’ automatically gives us an image of the color red in our minds.

Red has other images too:

- Anger
- Heat

It is always important to remember that images are used by poets to express their feelings and/or intentions.
Types of Images

Simple Description

• A large number of images which arise in a poem come from simple description of visible objects or actions.

• Often, simple imagery can be formed using similes and metaphors.

• Also, imagery can be formed by using sound pictures, created using onomatopoeia and alliteration.

Simple Imagery in Poetry

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end
William Shakespeare

I caught this morning morning’s minion, kingdom of daylight’s dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
Gerard Manley Hopkins

Dramatic Monologue & Dialogue

• As soon as the reader becomes aware that the poem is a dramatic monologue (speech by one person to an unseen audience) or a dialogue, he visualizes a speaker or speakers.

Story

• Like description, narration causes the reader (or hearer) to form images.

• When the reader realizes that he/she is being told a tale he visualizes from habit; he/she does not wish to miss the point of the story.
Metonymy

- A poet names one thing when he/she really means another thing with a close connection.

Seven little foreheads stared up at me from the first row. (where “foreheads” is used for “eyes”).

Ottawa sent those boys to war. (“Ottawa” is used instead of the Canadian Government.

Onomatopoeia

- Although imagery usually refers to visual images, there are also aural (sound-related) images.

- The use of words which sound like their meaning is called onomatopoeia. e.g. buzz, hiss, clang, splash, murmur, chatter, etc.

Common Imagery Themes

- Winter
- Spring
- Summer
- Autumn
- Color