# Understanding & Interpreting Poetry

*Following is a list of questions that you may apply to any poem. Answering these questions may help you better understand the message the speaker of the poem is trying to relate.*

1. Who is the speaker? What kind of person is speaking?
2. To whom is the person speaking? What king of person is he or she?
3. What is the occasion?
4. What is the setting in time (hour, season, century, etc.)?
5. What is the setting in place (indoors or outdoors, city or country, land or sea, region, country, hemisphere, etc.)?
6. What is the central purpose of the poem?
7. State the central idea or theme of the poem in a sentence.
8. Discuss the tone of the poem. How is it achieved?
9. a. Outline the poem so as to show its structure and development or  
   b. Summarize the events of the poem.
10. Paraphrase the poem.
11. Discuss the diction of the poem. Point out words that are particularly well chosen and explain why.
12. Discuss imagery of the poem. What kinds of imagery are used?
13. Point out examples of metaphor, simile, personification and explain their appropriateness.
14. Point out and explain any symbols. If the poem is allegorical, explain the allegory.
15. Point out and explains examples of paradox, overstatement, understatement, and irony. What is their function?
16. Point out and explain any allusions. What is their function?
17. Point out significant examples of sound repetition and explain their function.
18. What is the meter of the poem?
19. Copy the poem and mark it scanson.
20. Discuss the adaptation of sound to sense.
21. Criticize and evaluate the poem.