

# **FRACTIONS:** A Method for Analyzing Poetry

## **FR** First Reading

In this step, you will read the poem through entirely and, upon completion, write down your initial impressions. Don't skip the title! Your comments can be as simple as "The speaker seems sad about losing something" or "This poem seems to be a celebration of something." Although this step seems simple, it is crucial to analyzing the poem. If you try to begin analyzing parts of the poem before having a preliminary understanding of the poem as a whole, you are likely to make incorrect assumptions and misinterpret the poem.

## **ACT** A Complete Thought

This step requires that you section off the poem into complete thoughts and then briefly summarize each. Usually, punctuation marks dictate the completion of a thought or idea, not necessarily the end of a line. Also, a complete thought does not necessarily mean the end of a sentence. One sentence may contain multiple complete thoughts. By dividing the poem into complete thoughts and explaining those thoughts in your own words, you essentially paraphrase the entire poem.

## **IO** Identify the Obvious

Any poem contains a variety of literary devices. In this step, you must identify the obvious, tangible literary elements that are present in the poem. You may mark them on the poem itself, looking for any of the many poetic devices, such as alliteration, simile, personification, rhyme, and all the others. This is probably the most time-consuming step of the analysis because you need to make sure that you have identified and marked every discernible element that you can find in the poem.

## **N** Nuances

Using the literary elements that you identified in the previous step, you now infer the nuances—the connotation or suggestions of the poem—such as the tone, overall effect, and purpose. This is the step that requires you to **THINK**, to go beyond the mere identification of the literary elements to your own evaluation of **WHY** the poet chose to use them. How do the literary devices help convey the meaning of the poem? Why did the poet use the particular elements he did? In this step, you suggest your own ideas and impressions of why you think the poet made the choices he did.

## **S** Statement of Meaning (Theme)

This is the end result of your analysis. In this step, you must, upon review all of the previous steps' information, write a sentence incorporating both the meaning of the poem and the techniques used to communicate it. If you were writing an essay, this would be your thesis statement.

\*Note that all of these steps should be annotated directly on the poem.