

PV Log: (circle one) Poem / Movie / Picture / LyricDate 12/2/13Title "Introduction to Poetry"Author / Director / Billy Collins

Context (Where Found / Viewed / Read?)

Found on Shmoop.com while searching for poems for this project

Content / CD / Summary / Precis (Say? "Plot? Setting/Situation? Key lines/phrases scenes, etc?)

This poem is presumably about a teacher trying to get his students to learn how to interpret a poem. He wants them to have fun with it, listen to it, feel it, waterski across it, use their various senses to discover the true meaning of the poem. The students do not appear to listen, however, and Collins describes them as tying the poem to a chair and torturing it and beating it with hose.

Content / CM / Meaning? / Theme(s)?

This poem is about interpreting poems. I have never tried to interpret a poem about interpreting a poem before, but here it goes. This poem not only applies to interpreting poems, but interpreting everything in life. Every event that we deal with has meaning, and the theme of this poem is discovering it by poetic, fun, graceful ways rather than trying to force the meaning out of it. One will get more out of having fun in life than they will if they go about it with a cold heart trying seriously to discover the hidden meaning to everything.

Form (Diction? Construction Terms? Symbolism?)

This poem is divided into many stanzas, each describing different means that one could try to interpret a poem. The last two stanzas describe what the students try to do to interpret a poem, and it is very unpoetic. The students symbolize everyone with a rock hard heart in society. They refuse to change and they aren't open to imagination. The bright people in this world are the ones with imagination who can interpret poems by going on an adventure through the poem.

Commentary (What do you want to say? Why like? Questions? Synthesis / Allusions-Connections / Relevance to personal experience, to literature, 20Q's? etc.)? "Poetic" Traits?

This poem is one of the most fun poems I've written about, because the poem is about what I am doing right now. The subject of the poem is interpretation of poems, and right now I'm trying to interpret a poem about interpreting poems. I love the means by which the author wants us to interpret poems. We need to interpret by seeing, touching, feeling, smelling, solving, rather than beating down the poem one word at a time to try to use its literal meaning to discover its figurative meaning. Oftentimes, the "students" in this poem are the people who take the poems too seriously and too closed-heartedly. The ways that the author wants us to interpret poems are definitely poetic because they make us use all of our senses and they engulf us in the poem.

over (do not mix logs; e.g., no poem log in front, and movie log on back)

Introduction to Poetry

I ask them to take a poem
and hold it up to the light
like a color slide

or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem
and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem's room
and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski
across the surface of a poem
waving at the author's name on the shore.

But all they want to do
is tie the poem to a chair with rope
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose
to find out what it really means.