

Name:

Ms. Davis

AP Lit & Comp, period:

Date:

### How to make a poem FIT together

Bell work: Is there only one correct way to read a poem? If several possible readings exist, which one is the best?

- Essential questions: Can we shift emphasis from “right” and “wrong” readings to **insightful readings**? How do we interpret poetry insightfully?
- Think of a poem as a puzzle. We are going to FIT the pieces of a poem together in order to make sense of it.

**Facts: Read the lines of the poem.** Gather as much indisputable information about the poem as possible.

- Who is the author?
- What’s the form?
- Is there a rhyme scheme? If so, what is it?
- What is/are the action(s)?
- What are the images of the poem?
- And so on...

**Interpretation: Read between the lines of the poem.** Once the facts have been established (e.g., it’s an elegy in rhyming couplets, the speaker is a young girl whose father has just died, it takes place in a graveyard, it was written in 1714), you should begin to ask certain questions about the poem that will lead you from mere observations to more sophisticated reading moves such as **inference**.

- Is the speaker serious or ironic?
- What seems to be the overall tone?
- How is this tone achieved?
- Does the rhyme scheme contribute anything to mood?

In this way, interpretation builds off of solid observation to produce more sure-footed analysis than you sometimes produce when attempting to read poems.

**Theme: Read beyond the text of the poem.** After you have used basic observations to make reasonable interpretations about the poem, you can pose the ultimate questions that will render an insightful reading.

- Why, after all, would someone bother to write a poem on a specific topic or use an image to capture an emotion?
- Why would readers value the ideas and artistry of the lines in a particular work?
- Does it contain themes relevant today even though it was penned two centuries ago?
- How can we know?