

Annotating a Poem

Making use of the Word/Association Technique

Word associations occur in our minds when reading or saying a word, or just thinking about the word.



What is Word Association

Association is one of the basic mechanisms of memory. It serves as a natural classifier of the conceptual content of the vocabulary of the poem. Ideas and concepts, which are available in our memory are based on our past experience. They can thus accurately reproduce an objectively existing relationship between the poem and the reader's experience of that poem.



Annotating a Poem

The Technique

- Carefully examine the prompt (if one is provided) for a proper direction or guide of what to look for in the poem.
- As you read closely, mark/note any words or phrases or poetic strategies that strike you as immediately relevant to insight or understanding of the prompt at work in the poem. You may also select words and phrases that stand out to you as significant or noteworthy.



Annotating a Poem

The Technique

- In proximity of these, begin listing associated words from your own encounter with these words/phrases/poetic strategies. These need not be synonyms, but instead connected ideas. By doing this you are bringing in your own experiences and connotations from the encounter with the poem. You are also creating a meaning for yourself--on your terms.
- These may serve as your evidence and explanation as you write or speak about tone, subject matter, and theme.

