Sound and Sense Poetry Practice

Directions:
Throughout the year, we will be reading some chapters from Perrine’s Sound and Sense: an Introduction to Poetry. It’s an excellent technical guide that introduces specific poetic techniques in each chapter, and then provides several poems that are specifically chosen to demonstrate those specific techniques.

For each assigned chapter:
1) Take notes on anything in the chapter that you can use as a tool for poetry analysis. Write down all definitions or concepts that are new to you or that you want to remember. Do this in note form, such as a bulleted list. Don’t write too much here - stick to the useful stuff!

2) Then, read the poems in the chapter and choose two that you can analyze for the technique(s) of that chapter. Print the title of each poem IN QUOTATION MARKS and include the name of the poet.

3) For each of the two poems you choose, write the following:
   a) EVIDENCE: Make a list of examples you find in the poem of the specific technique(s) discussed in that chapter. To do this, write the technique (e.g. “visual imagery, “tactile imagery,” “apostrophe,” “alliteration”) and under the technique, list (vertically) the words/phrases/lines from the poem that exemplify the technique.

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<th>Visual Imagery</th>
<th>Apostrophe</th>
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   b) THEME: State the universal theme of the poem in a complete sentence (not in a word or phrase!)

   c) ANALYSIS: Explain HOW the examples you listed in part “a” support the theme you listed in part “b”. Be sure to use only the specific technique covered by this particular chapter to explain your theme. For example, if the chapter is about imagery, explain how the imagery in the poem supports the universal theme. This is the portion of the homework that allows you to truly analyze the poem and it is the part I will pay most attention to when assessing this assignment.

EXAMPLE of #3 for “Those Winter Sundays” by Robert Hayden in Chapter 4 of Sound and Sense:

a) Evidence:
Sound imagery:
   • “hear the cold splintering, breaking”
   • “he’d call”
   • “speaking indifferently to him”
Visual imagery:
   • “fires blaze”
   • “polished my good shoes”
Tactile imagery:
   • “in the blueblack cold”
• “When the rooms were warm”
• “with cracked hands that ached”

Organic imagery:
• “fearing the chronic angers”

Kinesthetic imagery:

• “my father got up early”
• “put his clothes on”
• “I’d wake”
• “slowly I would rise and dress”

b) Theme Statement: True love is often expressed through actions rather than words.

c) Analysis: In his poem “Those Winter Sundays,” Hayden shows the deep and enduring love the speaker realizes his father showed for him, years after he has grown. The tactile imagery of the “blueblack” cold room being warmed by his father every morning, even Sundays, mirror the care the father had for his child and sacrifices he was willing to make, despite his “cracked hands that ached.” He took the time to get up and make sure his child had a warm house to wake to, despite the fact that “no one ever thanked him.” This seemingly small gesture, mirrored by the seemingly mundane kinesthetic imagery of the father putting his close on and the son slowly getting up and getting dressed, along with the seemingly trivial act of the father shining his son’s shoes, show how love is shown, not through grand gestures, but daily small acts of kindness and consideration.

That this was not a tension free family is shown in the organic imagery of the son fearing the “chronic angers” of the house and the fact that the son spoke indifferently to his father, as many children do from time to time. And yet, despite the unnamed problems of family life, the father consistently rose and “made banked fires blaze,” created a warm house for his family. The image of the father leaning over the fire in the dark, cold morning, getting the fire going for his family is a powerful symbol of the efforts of parents everywhere that want to make a good, happy life for their family. The auditory and tactile imagery of the “cold splintering, breaking” is representative of the speaker’s change in attitude toward his father. It is only later in life, perhaps after becoming a parent himself, that he truly understands the depth of his father’s devotion to him, and his previously indifferent, cold view of his father warms in recognition of this fact.

Teaching note: This is a challenging assignment for my AP Literature students and we begin the first chapter in class together. I begin by modeling the notes I would take on the first page of the chapter and then let them try the second page on their own and we literally compare notes to see what constitutes useful tools for each of us. Also, instead of choosing two poems from the chapter, we’ll analyze one poem in common and they’ll choose another on their own. We do the analysis of the poem in common in pairs and then students will come to the board where I’ve posted the poem and comment on what they’ve found when it comes to examples of the chapter technique. With weekly reflection and discussion of what we’ve found, the expectations for
depth of analysis can gradually be increased. It is definitely a group effort that results in individual confidence. Please don’t hesitate to contact me with questions: jkrulder@pusdk12.org