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UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH PROJECT

**Systematic Analysis of Poetry: Providing a Framework**

at Salahaddin University College of Education-

English Department

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# Certification

I certify that this study was prepared by students (Aween Omed Masood and Gashben Barzan Omer) under my supervision at College of Education/ Salahaddin University- Erbil in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor in English Language.

Signature

Dr. Bander Muhammed

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# Abstract

Poetry is a creative writing and analyzing creative writings is challenging. How can one judge on the creative writing whose main characteristic is to be creative and new. The aim of this graduation project is to find a model that can be used to analyze poems all the time.

A few models are examined to find a more holistic model that can provide a bigger and better picture of the poem. The paper is divided into three sections. Section one is an introduction and the problems, aims and methodology are talked about in that section. Section two is literature review in which elements of poetry and ages of poetry are explained. Section three is methodology in which data collection and analysis procedures are explained.

The main findings of the study are that analysis should be divided into structure and content and knowing something about the poet and the age in which the poem is can help in understanding the intended meaning.

# Section One

# Introduction:

## **The problem**

Analyzing poetry is subjective which means everyone has his/her own views on how to and what to analyze in a poem. Every analyst depends on his or her own background and interest to identify the pieces of analysis.

## **The Aim of the Research**

The aim is to provide a model which can be followed by everyone, to analyze a poem. The main aim is to identify the components of poetry so as to include all of them in the model to provide a framework for understanding poems better. Another aim of the research project is to help readers appreciate poetry more by knowing what they need to look for or analyze.

## **Significance of the Research**

This graduation paper is important for teachers and students to know what to focus on in analyzing poetry. It is also important for analysts to follow one unified model. It is important for analysts to have a framework when analyzing literary works.

* 1. **Methodology:**

To arrive at the specified objective, a detailed description of theoretical background is provided. Based on the literature review gap and a semi structured interview with poetry teachers, a template has been formulated. The model is a proposition to have a systematic analysis of poems to be used as a template. The data collection procedure is literature review and semi structured interview. The data are analyzed using content analysis.

# Section Two

# Literature Review

In this section, theoretical background about poetry and poetry analysis are explained. The section is divided into certain sub sections like elements of poetry and ages of poetry and a poetry analysis model is provided to build upon it.

## **2.1 Elements of poetry:**

Literature has some genres and the genres are different in many aspects including the structure. However, there are some elements that are shared by all the literary genres.

## **2.1.1 Structure:**

Structure of poetry has nothing to do with the content or meaning. Structure is the form of the poem and is divided into certain parts:

**2.1.1.1 Rhyme** is the repetition of syllables, typically at the end of verse line. Rhymed words conventionally share all sounds of following the word’s last stressed syllable.

Example: cat/hat, dog/log

**2.1.1.2 Rhythm** an audible pattern in verse established by the intervals between stressed syllables.

**Alliteration**: Alliteration is a literary technique derived from Latin, meaning “letters of the alphabet.” It occurs when two or more words are linked that share the same first consonant sound, such as “fish fry.”

**2.1.2.1 Enjambment:** Enjambment is continuing a line after the line breaks. Whereas many poems end lines with the natural pause at the end of a phrase or with punctuation as end-stopped lines, enjambment ends a line in the middle of a phrase, allowing it to continue onto the next line as an enjambed line. Enjambment is derived from the French phrase enjambment meaning to “straddle something,” as the sentence extends to a next line.

**2.1.2 Content:**

Apart from the structure or form of the oems, the content or meaning of the poem can be divided into certain pieces to understand the overall meaning better:

**2.1.2.1 Symbol**: something in the world of the senses, including an action that reveals or is a sign for something else, often abstract.

For example a rose often considered a symbol of affection and love.

**2.1.2.2 Metaphor**: is when a word or phrase for one thing is used in place of another in order to make a comparison between two unlike things and suggest a similarity.

Example unless you’re at the elephant in the room is a metaphor.

**2.1.2.3 Personification**: a figure of speech in which the poet describes an abstraction, a thing or a nonhuman form as if it were a person. In other words give animate characteristic to inanimate.

**2.1.2.4 Imagery:** It's a Poetry component that evoke one or more of the five senses to elicit a series of mental images. Readers can grasp and fully experience a new emotion by using their own associations when using effective imagery. Poets and authors have the ability to isolate particular sensory elements that elicit more profound abstractions andgeneralizations.The appeal of tangible imagery may stem from mechanisms that aid Memory and learning.

**2.2.2.5Allusion:** A literary reference to something in history or previous literature In poetry and literature, allusion is used to imply a deeper connotative connection to something already existing. It can be used to explain a concept or idea that is included in the work by comparing or contrasting it to another piece. In some cases, it may be enough to hint at the influence or inspiration behind a piece.

**2.2 Ages of poetry / literature**

Poetry, from the Greek poesies meaning 'making' or 'creating', has a long history. As an art, poetry may out date literacy itself. In prehistoric and ancient societies poetry was used as a way to record cultural events or tell stories. Poetry is among the earliest records of most cultures with poetic fragments found on monoliths, rune stones, and stelae.

The telling of stories about history have been used up until the 20th century, and in some cases, it is still in use today. During the middle Ages, Ballads were a common way of doing just this, and it was also a way to pass along news throughout the kingdoms. Today, Ballads are not used in the same way. However, Odes, for example, have been and will always be a way to tell stories about history’s greatest feats.

The oldest surviving poem is the "Epic of Gilgamesh". The poem, based on the history of King Gilgamesh, was written around 3000 BC in Sumer, Mesopotamia in cuneiform script on clay tablets.

Ancient societies such as the Chinese Shi Jing developed canons of poetic works to ritual, as well as aesthetic, importance. Recently, intellectuals have struggled to find a definition that covers the entire poetic compass from the differences of haiku to Shakespearean to slam poetry. Tatakiewicz, a Polish historian of aesthetics, wrote in The Concept of Poetry "poetry expresses a cert

ain state of mind." This view point has been growing in popularity every year. Today, even media that doesn't involve words has been called poetry; for example, paintings and classical music.

Aristotle's Poetics describes three genres of poetry: epic, comic and tragic. Aristotle's work was highly influential throughout the Middle East during the Islamic Golden Age, then through Europe during the Renaissance. Later, aestheticians described poetry to have three major genres: epic, lyric and dramatic, with dramatic holding the subcategories tragic and comedy.

During early modern Western tradition, poets and aestheticians sought to distinguish poetry from prose by using the understanding that prose was written in a linear narrative form and used logical explication, while poetry was more abstract and beautiful.

Modern theorists rely less on opposing prose and poetry as to focusing on the poet as an artist. Intellectual disputes over the definition of poetry had erupted throughout the 20th century resulting in rejection of traditional forms and structures of poetry, coinciding with questioning of traditional definitions of poetry and its distinction between prose. More recently, post-modernists began to embrace the role of the reader and highlight the concept of poetry; incorporating its form from other cultures and the past. Poetry, like the world, may be said to have four ages, but in a different order the first age of poetry being the age of iron; the second, of gold; the third, of silver; and the fourth, of brass.

The first, or iron age of poetry is that in which every man is a warrior, and when the great practical maxim of every form of society, "to keep what we have and to catch what we can," is not yet disguised under names of justice and forms of law, is the naked motto of the naked sword. In these days, the only three trades flourishing are those of king, thief, and beggar. The first rude songs of all nations appear to be brief historical notices, in a strain of tumid hyperbole, of the exploits and possessions of a few pre-eminent individuals. Poetry is thus in its origin panegyric. The savage indeed lisps in numbers, and all rude and uncivilized people express themselves in the manner which we call poetical. Poets are as yet the only historians and chroniclers of their time, and the sole depositories of all the knowledge of their age. They are observing and thinking, while others are robbing and fighting: and though their object be nothing more than to secure a share of the spoil, yet they accomplish this end by intellectual, not by physical, power.

The golden age of poetry finds its materials in the age of iron. This age begins when poetry begins to be retrospective. Men also live more in the light of truth and within the interchange of observation. From these two circumstances, they easily and naturally deduce two conclusions: 1st, That men are degenerated, and 2nd, That they are less in favour with the gods. When tradition, thus adorned and exaggerated, has surrounded the founders of families and states with so much adventitious power and magnificence, there is no praise which a living poet can, without fear of being kicked for clumsy flattery, address to a living chief that will not still leave the impression that the latter is not so great a man as his ancestors. This is the age of Homer, the golden age of poetry.

Then comes the silver age, or the poetry of civilized life. The poetry of this age is characterized by an exquisite and fastidious selection of words, and a labored and somewhat monotonous harmony of expression. The imitative consists in recasting, and giving an exquisite polish to, the poetry of the age of gold: of this Virgil is the most obvious and striking example. This state of poetry is however a step towards its extinction. The poet of the age of silver re-casts the poems of the era of gold. Virgil knew better than to write an epic about Caesar; he left him to Livy and travelled out of the confines of truth and history into the old regions of poetry and fiction. Good sense and elegant learning are the perfection of the original and imitative poetry of civilized life.

The iron age of classical poetry may be called the bardic, the golden, the Homeric; the silver, the Virgilian; and the brass, the Nonnic. Modern poetry has also its four ages, but "it wears its rue with a difference". After the dark ages came the middle ages, when the light of Christianity began to spread over Europe. The emerging of the nations of Europe from this super induced barbarism was accompanied with a wild spirit of adventure. The semi-deification of women by the maxims of the age of chivalry produced the romance of the middle Ages. From these ingredients of the iron age of modern poetry, dispersed in the rhymes of minstrels and the songs of the troubadours, arose the golden age. Cowper divested verse of its exquisite polish; he paid more attention to his thoughts than his verse. Milton may be said to stand alone between the ages of gold and silver. Authority was beginning to be shaken, not only in poetry but in the whole sphere of its dominion. The contemporaries of Gray and Cowper were deep and elaborate thinkers. Enquiry was roused, the activity of intellect excited, and poetry came in for its share.

**2.3 Poetry and Analysis**

According to this model of poetry analysis provided by university of Missori (2018), poems need to be divided into these pieces:

1. The title:

The first thing to talk about is the title. We have to know what the title means literally and figuratively.

2. Summary

Write a brief summary of the poem in your own words and Highlight or list some of the words (nouns, verbs, phrases) that are important to understanding the poem.

3. The meaning of the poem

Now think about the meaning of the poem, not just the obvious meaning of each word but what they mean beyond the literal. Do these words suggest something else?

4. Poetic devices:

There are some poetic devices or literary devices and need to be checked to get a more detailed view about the content. The figurative language includes: Simile

Metaphor personification tone point of view imagery alliteration

5. Theme:

Identify the theme (central idea) of the poem. How does the theme convey the poem’s message?

6. Look at the title again

Do we now have a different interpretation of the title?

7. Analysis of the poem

Start with the introductory paragraph. It should contain the title, the author, and an explanation of the writer’s position as well as the significance of the title. Include a brief overall statement of the meaning of the poem.

8. Historical and cultural context

Integrate the research you have done on your author into your poetry analysis.

The analysis should take the form of a template so that it can be assessed easily. It gives a structure to the whole analysis.

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**Section three**

**Data collection and ANALYSIS**

**3.1 Introduction:**

In this section, the procedures followed for data collection and analysis are explained. The data is a semi structured interview and the data are used through the use of content analysis.

**3.2 Data collection:**

The aim of this graduation paper to provide a model for poetry analysis. Hence, the insights and views of poetry teachers are received through a semi structured interview (see appendix). The teachers are or were teaching poetry module at Salahaddin Univerisyt – Erbil.

Furthermore, based on literature review and some templates of poetry analysis a new and adapted model is proposed to analyze poems more holistically.

**3.3 Data analysis:**

The interviews are analyzed using content analysis which is categorizing the insights and views of the interviewees. As such, a model is created to be applied to any poem that we are tasked to analyze.

3.4 findings:

The intervewees divided their analysis into certain parts, most of which are abiout the content. The structure of poems is also important and it can be the first step of our analysis because it is easier and we do not need to know the meaning of the words to analyze the structure. The content or meaning is also need to be some smaller pieces of analysis.

The model for analysis can be as follows:

1. The title
2. The structure
3. The content
4. The setting
5. The poet
6. The age
7. Linking all together

To assess the model and understand it better, an example is provided to seethe applicability of the model.

**3. A sample**

Caged Bird

BY MAYA ANGELOU

A free bird leaps

on the back of the wind

and floats downstream

till the current ends

and dips his wing

in the orange sun rays

and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird thatstalks

down his narrow cage

can seldom see through

his bars of rage

his wings are clipped and

his feet are tied

so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings

with a fearful trill

of things unknown

but longed for still

and his tune is heard

on the distant hill

for the caged bird

sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze

and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees

and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn

and he names the sky his own.

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams

his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream

his wings are clipped andhis feet are tied

so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings

with a fearful trill

of things unknown

but longed for still

and his tune is heard

on the distant hill

for the caged bird

sings of freedom.

To analyze this poem, we have to divided it into some smaller pieces and we are going to follow our model of analysis:

1. **The title**

(caged bird) is about a bird that is in a cage and apparently bird are created to fly and be free. Hence, they are removed from natural environment and their basic rights are removed from them.

1. **The structure:**

The poem cosnsists of six stanzas and there is no specific rhyme or rhythm so as to make the reader focus on the conent.

There are a lot of enjambments and each stanza is either about free bird or cage dbird. There is also internal rhyming (dawn , lawn) in the fourth stanza.

1. **The content:**

There are metaphors and symbolism. Symbolisms like (their feet are tied / cage = not free), (sing = speak).

1. The setting:

There is a comparison between caged bird and free bird to understand what each one can do or are allowed to do.

1. The poet:

Maya Angelou is an African American poet who was living in the USA in the sixties and seventies. She was an active feminisit fighting for the rights of the women like equalkity.

1. The age:

The poem was written in the seventies 1970s in the USA. At that time there were a lot of protests by African American community for equality and freedom.

1. Linking all together:

Caged bird is written by Maya ngelou. It is about the tension between African americana dsn white people on one side and between males and females on the other. Maya Angelou uses symbolism which is indirect contrast between them. She says that white people and men are free and can enjoy life and do whatever they want. African americans and women are not free and are put in a cage and can only speak.

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**Appendix (1)**

So if you do the fault new criticism criticism the critics the assumptions of the school will tell you everything about the text about what should you focus on what should you an alyze and then you have methodologies per school so you apply the methodologies based conclusion or maybe the results of your research, so as i said, when you approach a text or the form of the text, so that means you are doing a formalistic study or a formalistic analysis.But then we have let's say content so content is almost about themes, topics, subject matters ,so with the content you might be interested in the position of women in the text or maybe the class discrimination or I don't know psychology of the characters something about nature. in that case, you apply you got criticism. so you see and that's why when we approach literature of course which already be familiar with school staff we have, so once you choose your theory and of course you need Theory there are some main concerns so based on the concerns then you approach the text and then you approach the text and then you decide which way you go, whether you will do the perform of it or you do the content of it.so if you do the form usually by form, we mean the style the laguage. The meter rhyme rhythm. I do not see the figurative line. It might take hours to explain it does it truly does but it only in your opinion do you think context is more important or meaning is more important for students to focus more on in your opinion. So without choosing a theory without application of a theoretical school you cannot tell you cannot say whether you will be interested in the content but in the forward because as I said by the way concern with the students and always worried about the Department the schools that critics by searches by universities programs so if you when you decide to analyze a text first they have to decide why should I analyze that this time which school should I use so I get a proper analysis so again if you know again just like our students because you understand schools it might be somehow difficult to understanding but if you say for example I want to focus on military devices in my analysis then the decision is already made about the forward yeah I got it yeah I see yes. Familiar with the techniques I mean for example you need to formalism let's say a formalistic analysis of the text first you have to know what you mean by formalism who are the critics the history of it the principles the tennis part of it so when you choose reformalism okay then you go for for example techniques like this developed they languages converted to a literally one and of course as when you do the methodology then if you decide the content for example be interested in the topics matter then you go for the schools that might help you if you are interested in the position of women usually feminism and again you cannot do the analysis without rules I mean you would be you would come up the objective I see how exactly and people and academia when you do it objectively it means you apply a theory so based on the theory you analyze the text you talk about the language so many other things when you say which I don't know what would you interested in analyzing the pro then it is the theory or the pH the theoretical schools that will tell you you cannot do it from a very nerve perspective it's very clear actually the main point my aim is to see that how to like turning poetry from subjective point of view to an objective one and unfortunately I have to tell you my dear teacher so many students so many teachers disagreed with this point of view that you have just mentioned they said you are not changed poetry from subjectivity to objectivity because poetry itself represents once a theme once point of view once perspective that how they have been through this life and how they feel connected to the poem that's why you cannot like make it very objective you might make an objective through the which is that from formatical you know the ories and those kind of stuff you cannot like change the meaning how you connect to the poet, objectivity so as I said because the students almost I can say 98% of the teachers no they are not I like I have to be really honest with you from what I see from you like I have seen that they are not seeing the things as yet as when you do so of course believing that produce objective it talks about personal matters personal life but as I said when we say subjectivity objectivity so all about the applicant because the way they do it around the world, in uk. Or advanced universities. Objectivity this is what I mean when you apply so it doesn't matter whether you talk about yourself because some Theory spoke about the sort of question of transaction I mean for example Theory for the text by the way so and no one can say the subjective although. [By DR. Saman]

appendix (2)

Good morning good morning your name and your major my name is Shri Kamal specialized in English language specifically and literature and more specific American trump how many years have you been teaching poetry about 12 what do you think when it comes to analyzing students Gets Lost and I was like what do you think where they get the problem is that students they forget about what they have been studied before concerning the procedure of analyzing depending on the background of an introduction to English generally specifically dealing with the technique of analyizing any poem ,okay they just you know start any stage before for example analyzing upon you should you know pay attention to the students they don't pay attention that they just you know depend highly on the teacher okay without you know making an effort in otherwise upon what do you think as a teacher we should focus on analyzing any poll we should go for a framework we have social framework or elements of meaning what do you think we should focus on and leave people yes there's a specific way to analyze any form is that first we have to do something about the background of the poet himself or herself whether you know that's foam is personal feelings or personal experience in his life or her life and then we come to the title itself what it presents okay and then taking the general meaning of the whole poem and then the specific you know specific meaning of each stanza if a kind of divided into senses and then paint attention to the of analyzing the poem depending on the sound devices meaning devices all these you know when you come to analyse such upon you know students are not paying attention to what they have studied already before so the teacher have to start actually from you know from the beginning giving them above ground about you know poetry and the techniques and the devices and then they come start with analyzing the pole unfortunately we have students they are just listeners that are not competitive and we cannot depend on them actually analyzing upon for example text if I give them to analyze it something is not included in them and they curriculum they will fail because they don't know how to apply on your solution or the author or the place the area of course this is really important this is the first step that anyone should take it others in poultry or a normal or a drama first of all the background about the age itself and then the writer the poet or the dramatist the novels okay his life her life what you can find there okay studying studying the biography of any literary figure it means it giving you you know the frame the frame of the mind in which this literary work is a created okay so here we have to decide whether this you know topic is revealing private life or it is out of data imagination when you know something that is related to his or to make it a few much easier for the reader to analyze it but it is if it is you know out of creativity of the power then it will be subject to readers analysis of the okay I will give you for example something about one of the of the drama test what they ask him about waiting for godo they ask you what do you think about waiting for God the way you mean by god they said don't worry you ask me it is it is not me to be asking so the critics say so how we're going to know that what you mean by say it is subject to readers perspectives okay I write it out of creativity it has nothing with my personal life okay so you analyze it the way that is connected with the readers atmosphere life age herself okay so the term you know determine from the beginning what that is related to the life of the of the arthriter code dramatist or no that will save half of the way in analyzing any literally work so my last question is do you think we should fix its framework when it comes to analyzing up perspective for example somebody should be done I prefer that all those students they study you know on election the stage and the teachers supposed to give them as a background but what we do because running out of time we just give general things shortcut things for the students from the teacher of poetry for example has to start from the beginning of the students okay you concerning the frame of analyzing any part the devices sound devices and meaning devices how to conclude you know the general they should they should from the beginning they should be introduced to unintroductory part about how to deal with any poem from the beginning before you know before starting with the curriculum okay so the students should be guided by the teacher of portray because when they have studied before just introduction or they're not academic state you just framework for example if anyone not just an academic person anyone maybe you interested you have the first analyze we have we have two ways for analyzing upon what is the third with the devices on the other thing is I'm concerning the meaning of the power the meaning of the poem the meaning of depends on any other study but the devices is objective objective okay so we have something objective something objective please students they should know the objective things okay on the subjective things is in a related to the meaning of the poem itself so you have subjectivity and objectivity of any problem that's all thank you[mrs.shirin]

**Appendix (3)**

I have been teaching practices for I guess 12 years so criticism is very important for the students to get benefit and to understand as well as to be familiar how to analyze the literary text this is any questions the first questions I'm not teaching poetry while I'm teaching only noble as well as drama but in your opinions concerning my opinion info series the most important aspect you supposed to focus on the message in ideas the main idea so the theme exactly through us analyzing and understanding the meaning of each word within each stanza and finally you will get the message of the last question is do you have any recommendations for providing a framework or do you have any idea how to make the student to understand like I used to tell my students follow up concept map draw concept maps for yourself and that case the all eye all the ideas will be integrated on your mind Yanni the concept map and this poem you will make it yani you will distribute to the main message of the poet throughout concept map and then you come in order for analyzing stanzas according to the concept map by soul doing you have any graved all the ideas within your mentality so this is the best way in order to not not to forget the main ideas okay and to follow up not only this is way of teaching can be applied also it is very benefit for poultry as well as the drama I literally text or any traffic by there any topic okay so this is my concerning my point of view some of okay. [By Dr. Shirin]

How many years have beenI teach right now creative writing and as well as introduction to literature my major is English literature I've got Masters and modern as well writing my desertation as a part of teaching poetry, literature for five years five succeeding this and at the moment poetry I'm teaching contain literature.. literature poetry has been a great concern and I've been teaching classical tree Victoria poetry as well as modern poetry of the teaching moral poetry spiritual poetry modernist poetry and poetry terms of priv ate and States universities and I think our tree is one of the most beautiful journalists of literature because it's very aesthetic contains unique Styles and formats of literary composition with emotions and Po etic imagery here true does not come from it took so understanding the background of the poet if it could be is necessary then what comes later is understanding conditions of the social or cultural situations through which has been born in analyzing poem or any piece of poetry needs that deep wonder maybe psycho analytical s or the structure of the foam is Reg composed format the utility devices the aesthetic last but not least we have to analyze the social wonder in a philosophical in-depth and by this I mean that we have to think at the largest scope we should not only think about the words but she's also think about Beyond the word and Beneath the Lights the other question which is the last one where do I think students have a problem I think first of all the majority of students by nature do not like poetry in simple terms they're not interested in literature what comes after is that the reason for this they have poor linguistic catability and they have linguistics skills they do not have a high rate of reading skills techniating not understand certain Concepts and terminology what we should do as teachers that we should encourage them to read more and we should encourage them to think recently I think for those students who have critical thinking they have better intention and willingness to understand and appreciate Literature in general and poetry has specifically for biggest problem is that they are not interested thinking deep and they're not opportunity to enrich their minds with these analytical experience talking to first.[Dr. Buxari Abdulla]

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# Abstract in Kurdish language