



From Parts of Speech to Diction Analysis Grade Ten

Read the poem carefully once, just for enjoyment. Then follow the directions that follow the poem to examine it more closely.

A Blessing

Just off the highway to Rochester, Minnesota
Twilight bounds softly forth on the grass.
And the eyes of those two Indian ponies
Darken with kindness.
They have come gladly out of the willows
To welcome my friend and me.
We step over the barbed wire into the pasture
Where they have been grazing all day, alone.
They ripple tensely, they can hardly contain their happiness
That we have come.
They bow shyly as wet swans. They love each other.
There is no loneliness like theirs.
At home once more,
They begin munching the young tufts of spring in the darkness.
I would like to hold the slenderer one in my arms
For she has walked over to me
And nuzzled my left hand.
She is black and white,
Her mane falls wild on her forehead,
And the light breeze moves me to caress her long ear
That is delicate as the skin over a girl's wrist.
Suddenly I realize
That if I stepped out of my body I would break
Into blossom.

by James Wright

1. Highlight in a different color and/or mark with a different shape (single lines, double lines, parentheses, brackets, circles, squares, wavy lines, triangles) the following parts of speech:
 - Nouns
 - Adjectives
 - Pronouns
 - Conjunctions
 - Verbs
 - Adverbs
 - Verbals
 - Prepositions

Every word in the poem should be labeled.

2. Select one noun, one verb, one adjective, one adverb, and use a dictionary to give the denotations (meanings) of the word. Then give as many connotations (suggestions) of the word as you can.
3. Using the same words from number 2 (or 4 new words), give 3 synonyms for each, and explain why each word Wright chooses is the best choice. Explain how the poem would be affected if Wright had used one of the synonyms.
4. List all concrete nouns; list all abstract nouns. Explain what each group contributes to the poem.
5. List the general words; list the specific words. Explain which part of speech you think contributes most to specificity by giving examples.
6. List all the active verbs; list all the linking verbs. Explain the effect of the different types of verbs. Describe the effect of changing the linking verbs to active verbs – or if you could.
7. Pick the most significant word in the poem regardless of its part of speech, and discuss why you think this one word is so important.
8. Discuss Wright's level of diction. Consider how many polysyllabic words and how many difficult words he uses. Explain why he uses this level of diction.
9. How does the writer's choice of diction reveal the speaker's attitude?
10. Now select one of your own compositions (poem or prose) and go through the same process with a paragraph of your own work. It might be easier to work with a classmate's composition first, then your own.