**Gimme Three Steps**

**How to Read a Poem and Get Something Out of It**

Dixie Dellinger, MA, and Christy Scarborough

1. **TOPIC – “Who” or “what” is the poem about?**

* *Mark* the sentences. Bracket at the punctuation so you can how ideas flow from line to line.
* *Note* the “turns” or guide words: *but, so, and, yet, while, since,* etc.
* *Observe* the structure: stanza breaks, open spaces between lines, repetitions, line breaks
* *Identify* the speaker and his/her/its characteristics.
* *Trace* the movement in the poem from \_\_\_ to \_\_\_

1. **ARTISTRY – “How” the author creates the poem – mark examples and comment on their effects.**

* *Feel* the senses at work (imagery, sensory references)
* *Savor* the words you hear (diction, tone)
* *Move* with the beat or cadence of the words (rhyme, rhythm, onomatopoeia, momentum)
* *Observe* the artistry of the language (simile, metaphor, personification, allusions)
* *Ponder* the objects or actions (symbols)

1. **THEME – “Why” – What does the poem say to you about the topic?**

**Construct a two-part thesis:**

**1) Topic and theme statement**

**2) Artistry analysis summary**

**Example:** Edgar Allan Poe’s sonnet “To Science” explores the effect of a scientific outlook. Through the use of allusion, imagery, and symbolism, Poe laments how science has destroyed imagination.

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