T O P S -- P A T S – POETRY ANALYSIS MNEMONIC

T – Title

What does the title mean to the reader? What might the author have intended by the title? Look at the word choice carefully. Why these words? Think of other possible titles. Why does the author use this one?

O – Occasion

Is the poem intended for a particular occasion such as celebrating, commemorating, or mourning? If so, what words or techniques does the author use to reference the occasion?

P – Paraphrase

In your own words, paraphrase what the poem is about—the plot so to speak. Do this stanza by stanza, and then get an overall view of the poem

S – Speaker

Who is the speaker? Remember the speaker and author are frequently not the same. What is the speaker’s perspective? How does the author create the speaker in the work? How close is the speaker to the author?

P – Purpose

What was the author’s purpose in creating this work? Is the purpose clear to the reader? Does it have the same purpose for the author as it does for the reader? In what ways does the purpose impact the choices the author makes in creating the poem?

A – Analyze

Examine any and all poetic devices, focusing on how they contribute to the meaning of the poem. Consider: imagery, figures of speech, personification, and symbolism. Also, look at diction, POV, and sound devices such as alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhythm, and rhyme.

T – Tone

What tone does the author invoke? Tone is key for the AP exam. How does the author convey the tone? Look at language, images, details, diction, sentence structure.

S – Shifts

Look for shifts in perspective or moving from one line of thought to another. Take into account the following possible shifts: transition words, punctuation, stanza division, changes in stanza and/or sentence length. Changes in irony, sound, and diction can also occur.

T O P S -- P A T S – Get it? Your analysis of a poem should top mine. “I bet my understanding of “The Red Wheelbarrow” TOPS PAT’S.”