**Poetry Workshop**

**Core Analysis Tools**

**The Poet’s Tools**   To analyze the poem you’ve selected, you’ll need to re-read it several times. As you re-read, pay close attention to the poem’s **literary elements.** Careful analysis of the elements used in a particular work will make you aware of how the poet uses those elements to shape meaning and create certain effects. Use the Element and Analysis Questions for your prewriting on the poem.

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| **Element** | **Analysis Questions** |
| **Speaker:** the voice talking in the poem; the narrator of the poem (not necessarily the poet) | Who is speaking in the poem? Is the speaker the poet or a character created by the poet? |
| **Theme:** the meaning, or main idea, of the poem, usually involving some insight into human existence | Does the poem examine some common life experience or problem? Does it suggest solutions or answers? |
| **Tone:** the poet’s attitude toward the subject, the audience, or a character | What is the poet’s attitude toward the subject (sarcastic, respectful)? the audience (friendly, hostile)? the characters (sympathetic, cruel)? |
| **Stylistic devices:** the techniques the poet uses to control language to create certain effects | How does **diction,** the poet’s choice of key words, influence the poem’s meaning? Does the poet use **figurative language,** such as **metaphors** and **similes,** to make imaginative comparisons?What **sound devices,** such as **rhythm, rhyme,** and **repetition,** does the poet use? What effects do they have on the poem? |

**Practice and Apply #1**

Write your Element/Analysis Answers for your poem about the Speaker, the Theme, and the Tone.

**Stylistic/Literary Elements**

Identify one or more **key literary elements** that are essential to understanding the poem’s theme. Below you will find an analysis log one student created while analyzing the poem “A Dream Deferred” by Langston Hughes. It shows the poem and some of the student’s notes on the poem’s stylistic devices—what he determined to be the key literary element.

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|  **ANALYSIS LOG**  |
| 1   What happens to a dream deferred?2  Does it dry up3  like a raisin in the sun?4  Or fester like a sore—5  And then run?6  Does it stink like rotten meat?7  Or crust and sugar over—8  like a syrupy sweet?9  Maybe it just sags10  like a heavy load.11  *Or does it explode?* | **Line 1**         DICTION: “dream” = hope, aspiration for the future. “defer” = to delay temporarily, to give in to someone else.**Lines 2–3**   SIMILE: Deferred dream shrivels.**Lines 4–5**   SIMILE: Deferred dream becomes diseased, infected.**Line 6**         SIMILE: Deferred dream stinks of decay.**Lines 7–8**   SIMILE: Deferred dream is sickeningly sweet.**Lines 9–10** SIMILE: Deferred dream is a burden; it weighs the dreamer down.**Line 11**       METAPHOR: Deferred dream is a bomb that explodes and destroys.Possible THEME: A dream deferred causes destruction. This is the answer to the poem’s question. |

**Practice and Apply #2**

Read your poem several times. Create an analysis log.

**Gather Supporting Evidence**

**The Poem as Witness**   An analysis of a poem should contain accurate **references** to the poem. These references—quotations from the poem and details restated in your own words—will support the thesis. Each reference should be followed by **elaboration:** an explanation of how the quotation or detail supports your thesis. Elaboration shows you have a good grasp of the poem’s **significant** **ideas** and enables you to address the poem’s **ambiguities, nuances,** and **complexities.**

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| **•** |  **Ambiguities** are lines or words that lend themselves to more than one interpretation. (DICTION) |
| **•** |  **Nuances** are changes in tone or meaning. For example, a poem might start with a light tone and then turn more serious. (TONE) |
| **•** |  **Complexities** result when a poem is rich in meaning but difficult to interpret. For example, a poem may discuss problems that don’t have simple solutions, or ask questions that don’t have easy answers. (IDEAS) |

**Practice and Apply #3:**

Find AMBIGUITIES, words and lines with MORE THAN ONE INTERPRETATION:

Find CHANGES in TONE and MEANING:

Find COMPEX IDEAS:

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|  **Literary Element**  |  **Detail or Quotation**  |  **Elaboration**  |
| Stylistic device: Diction | “What happens to a dream deferred?” (1) | A dream can be a hope or an aspiration for the future. Defer is an ambiguous word. It can mean “to delay” or “to give in to what someone else wants.” |
| Stylistic device: Simile | “Does it dry up /like a raisin in the sun?”(2–3) | This is a complex image. The reader is meant to think of the dried and wrinkled raisin in contrast to the fat, juicy grape that the dream once was, before it dried up. |

**Practice and Apply #4**

Select 2 types of stylistic devices, find 2 quotations with proper format for each device, and write elaboration for each example.