

form and content



packaging

message

CRAFT

close reading

CONNECT FORM ← → CONTENT

# Champion "THE TEXT ITSELF"

intentional fallacy -

we don't care what the author intended

and we can never know

so just go ahead + analyze

~~authorial intention~~

the heresy of paraphrase

Don't you dare change a single word.

irreplaceable

unique

form


The shape + form + structure of a text is inherent to its meaning.

*Studies in the  
Structure of Poetry*

# The Well Wrought Urn



Commentary on the  
greatest poems of  
the English language from  
one of America's  
foremost literary critics

  
Cianth  
Brooks

# Steps to close reading:

1. Select a passage to focus on, usually 5-10 lines.  
→ check full of literary devices
2. Copy it over / read it aloud  
→ noticing details of their authorial choices.
3. Zoom in and annotate.

What do you notice?

Which literary devices are at play?

→ mark up / scribble on the text



4. Meaning making:

link

FORM

and

CONTENT

Why?

Job done the connections.

5. Write it up! Make sure you direct quote from the text + use literary terminology.

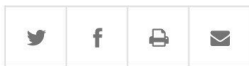
# Mother to Son

BY LANGSTON HUGHES

Well, son, I'll tell you:  
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.  
It's had tacks in it,  
And splinters,  
And boards torn up,  
And places with no carpet on the floor—  
Bare.  
But all the time  
I've been a-climbin' on,  
And reachin' landin's,  
And turnin' corners,  
And sometimes goin' in the dark  
Where there ain't been no light.  
So boy, don't you turn back.  
Don't you set down on the steps  
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.  
Don't you fall now—  
For I've still goin', honey,  
I've still climbin',  
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

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Source: *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes* (University of Missouri Press (BkMk Press), 2002)



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metaphor

Life ≠ crystal stair

Life = rough  
tattered  
staircase

tacks  
splinters  
boards torn up

longer, longer

slang, dialect

internal rhymes

6th

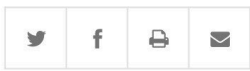
anaphora

imagery

bookends  
brackets

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anaphora

tone  
exhausting

punctuation

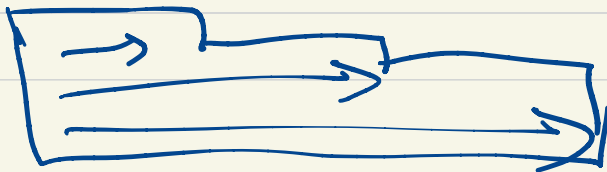
# "Mother to Son"

Thesis:

I. Dialect form = "Ise"  
"climbin'"  
"goin'"  
"aint"  
Harlem Renaissance  
formal education  
education → lesson. street smarts

II. Repetition / anaphora  
"and" (Moiré)  
3x resilience 3x

III. Expansion / Intensification (Wardy)



2 → 4 → 8  
imagery  
- splinters  
- boards  
- carpet

1 of 1

## Dim Lady

My honeybunch's peepers are nothing like neon. Today's special at Red Lobster is redder than her kisser. If liquid paper is white, her racks are institutional beige. If her mop were Slinkys, dishwater Slinkys would grow on her noggin. I have seen tablecloths in Shakey's Pizza Parlors, red and white, but no such picnic colors do I see in her mug. And in some minty-fresh mouthwashes there is more sweetness than in the garlic breeze my main squeeze wheezes. I love to hear her rap, yet I'm aware that Muzak has a hipper beat. I don't know any Marilyn Monroes. My ball and chain is plain from head to toe. And yet, by gosh, my scrumptious Twinkie has as much sex appeal for me as any lanky model or platinum movie idol who's hyped beyond belief.

metonymy

alliteration

assonance

HYPERBOLE

MOCK

SONNET



# Sonnet 130: My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;  
 Coral is far more red than her lips red;  
 If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;  
 If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.  
 I have seen roses damasked, red and white,  
 But no such roses see I in her cheeks;  
 And in some perfumes is there more delight  
 Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.  
 I love to hear her speak, yet well I know  
 That music hath a far more pleasing sound;  
 I grant I never saw a goddess go;  
 My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.

simile

color

smell

sound

tread  
touch

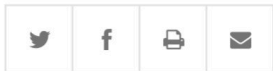
1-2 punch

And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare  
 As any she belied with false compare.

heroic couplet

2 rhymed lines of  
iambic pentameter.

Source: *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: Volume One Seventh Edition* (2000)



Imagery → 5 senses.

Related

## Close Reading of Harryette Mullen's "Dim Lady"

In her 2002 poem "Dim Lady," the American poet Harryette Mullen presents a mockery of William Shakespeare's well-known Sonnet 130, "My mistress' eyes..." She creates a hyperbole of his sonnet to showcase the absurdity of the objectification of women in poetry, both negatively and positively. Mullen's poem follows Shakespeare's sonnet in content almost line by line. For instance, Shakespeare writes "Coral is far more red than her lips red;" but Mullen replaces this with, "Today's spe- / cial at Red Lobster is redder than her kisser." While Shakespeare's tone throughout most of the sonnet seems critical and disappointed, we can hear in Mullen's speaker a voice that is more playful, rhythmical, and sarcastic: "And in some **m**inty-fresh **m**outh-washes there is more sweetness than in the garlic breeze my main squeeze wheezes." In this line, we see Mullen employing comical alliteration in the words "minty-fresh mouth-washes," as well as assonance in the words "sweetness," "breeze," "squeeze," and "wheezes." The poet jam-packs these lines with all of these literary devices to give a sense of fun and comparative mockery – almost ridiculing Shakespeare through hyperbole and exaggeration.

As for conclusions, Shakespeare ends his sonnet with the famous heroic couplet: "And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare / As any she belied with false compare." In essence, he is saying that his admiration for the woman is unique and unusual, unlike stereotypical loves. Mullen ends her poem by writing, "And yet, by gosh, my scrumptious Twinkie has a much sex appeal for me as any lanky model or platinum movie idol who's hyped beyond belief." With this final juxtaposition of the lover and the "lanky model" or "platinum movie idol," we get a sense of how absurd and provocative the speaker is in his exaggeration of these beauty ideals.