

## TP-CASTT Poetry Analysis - A Model Lesson

**Grade level:** Secondary Pre-AP English

**Assignment:** The student will present an oral poetry analysis using TP-CASTT analysis format. Notes for oral presentation will be typed in the attached format for the teacher to view during presentation. Student will provide a copy of the poem for other students to view during the presentation (poster, photocopies, etc.)

**Assessment:** 100 points possible - The following rubric will be used.

TP-CASTT Poetry Analysis Rubric		
Student Name: _____		
Poem: _____		
Points Possible	Discussion of Poetry Element	Comments
5	Title: Ponder the title before reading the poem.	
10	Paraphrase: Translate the poem into your own words (line by line).	
15	Connotation: Contemplate the poem for meaning beyond the literal. Explain and comment on significance.	
10	Attitude (Tone): Observe both the speaker's and the poet's attitude or tone. Comment on significance.	
10	Shift: Note shifts in speakers and in attitudes. Comment on significance.	
5	Title: Examine title again, this time on interpretive level. Comment on significance.	
15	Theme: Determine what the poet is saying. Comment on significance.	
10	Clarify, elaborate, expand: Provide in-depth interpretation.	
10	Respond appropriately to questions: Know about your poet and her/his works in general; know about this poem specifically.	
10	Provide required visual aids to teacher and students.	
Total Points Possible - 100		Total Points Received _____

TP-CASTT Poetry Analysis - A Model Student Paper  
by Patty Poorbuffalo Periwinkle

"The Eagle and the Mole"  
by Elinor Wylie

Avoid the reeking herd,  
Shun the polluted flock,  
Live like that stoic bird,  
The eagle of the rock.

The huddled warmth of crowds  
Begets and fosters hate;  
He keeps, above the clouds,  
His cliff inviolate.

When flocks are folded warm,  
And herds to shelter run,  
He sails above the storm,  
He stares into the sun.

If in the eagle's track  
Your sinews cannot leap,  
Avoid the lathered pack,  
Turn from the steaming sheep.

If you would keep your soul  
From spotted sight or sound,  
Live like the velvet mole;  
Go burrow underground.

And there hold intercourse  
With roots of trees and stones,  
With rivers at their source,  
And disembodied bones.

"T"

**TITLE**

**(Ponder the title before reading the poem.)**

"The Eagle and the Mole" is the title. An eagle is a bird of prey, and small animals are his prey. This might be about the strong preying on the weak. The eagle flies high and the mole burrows underground. It is possible that the poem could be about the contrast between two ideas, lifestyles, belief systems, etc. The eagle has good, sharp eyes; however, the mole is almost blind. Perhaps the poem looks at different ways of interpreting things in life (different points of view).

"P"

**PARAPHRASE**

**(Translate the poem into your own words.)**

<b>The Eagle and the Mole</b>	<b>Paraphrase</b>
Avoid the reeking herd, Shun the polluted flock, Live like that stoic bird, The eagle of the rock.	Don't hang around with crowds of stinky people; they are "polluted" (made foul or unclean). Instead, live like an eagle; be "stoic." (Stoic means marked by great self-control in the face of emotion or pain.)
The huddled warmth of crowds Begets and fosters hate; He keeps, above the clouds, His cliff inviolate.	Crowds of people are warm, but hate is born and nurtured there. The eagle is higher than the clouds; he keeps his environment "inviolable" -- free from violation or desecration.
When flocks are folded warm, And herds to shelter run, He sails above the storm, He stares into the sun.	When the crowds are all warm and cozy and sheltered, the eagle flies higher than any storm. He stares directly at the sun -- perhaps defiantly.
If in the eagle's track Your sinews cannot leap, Avoid the lathered pack, Turn from the steaming sheep.	If your sinews (muscles) aren't strong enough to allow you to accompany the eagle, you should still avoid the sweaty, dripping, stinking crowds of humanity.
If you would keep your soul From spotted sight or sound, Live like the velvet mole; Go burrow underground.	If you want your soul to be free from getting contaminated ("spotted") or from being seen and heard by the masses, go live underground like a mole.
And there hold intercourse With roots of trees and stones, With rivers at their source, And disembodied bones.	Living underground, you can visit with roots and stones and the water table. You can make friends with the bones of buried people.

"C"

**CONNOTATION**

**(Contemplate the poem for meaning beyond the literal.)**

- ❑ Elinor Wylie wrote during the early part of the 20th century. Unlike the traditional woman of the 1920s, she left her marriage and her child, ran away with a married man, and generally turned her nose up at the cultural expectation that women should act a certain way. It is helpful to keep this biographical information in mind, for many of her poems express frustration at the narrow focus of the woman's role in society.
- ❑ In "The Eagle and the Mole," the speaker uses the idea of herd animals as a motif throughout the poem. She seems to be using the words herd, flock, pack, and sheep as metaphors for humanity, indicating that people seek the safety of conformity.
- ❑ Using imperative sentences in an advice-giving mode, she urges the reader to "avoid," "turn from," and "shun" other people. These deliberate, careful word choices convey that the speaker's feeling toward gregariousness is negative. In fact, the word "shun" carries a connotation of death or, at least, nonexistence in some cultures. The fact that the entire poem is a series of commands allows the reader to assume that the narrator may have had some experience that justifies her feeling confident to advise the reader that humanity stinks. The fact that Elinor Wylie felt that women were not allowed to live freely as individuals fits in well with this interpretation.
- ❑ Along with using precise verbs to set the tone of the poem, the poet chooses powerful adjectives to express her apparent dislike of the human need to be a part of the masses. The speaker calls the "herd" "reeking," "polluted," "lathered," and "steaming." These participles paint a vivid picture of distasteful associations with undesirable companionship.
- ❑ The speaker praises the eagle and advises the reader to live like him. He is "stoic"; the connotation of this word is one of strength. The eagle is described as keeping his cliff "inviolated"; the preciseness of this word may indicate that Ms. Wylie viewed the strong individual as an entity who had to work hard and aggressively to "keep" his way of life from being violated. The poet's use of personification in giving the eagle the human choice of stoicism elevates this symbol in significance. The reader can easily imagine the human-like majesty of the eagle as he alliteratively "sails above the storm" and "stares into the sun"; the whistling wind comes to life with the sound of s.
- ❑ Toward the end of the poem, the speaker also praises the "velvet mole." Those who cannot soar like the eagle (experience individuality in a strong, confident, aggressive manner) are encouraged to "burrow underground" to live the life of an individual. Word choice, again, is extremely precise, as the speaker beautifully describes the mole (usually a disgusting creature) as "velvet." Underground, the individual will experience companionship with nice, clean roots, stones, and rivers, rather than with lathered, steaming globs of people.

### "A"

#### ATTITUDE (TONE)

(Observe both the speaker's and the poet's attitude or tone.)

The speaker appears to be making a strong statement about the importance of assertively making individual choices. The background of the poet supports this interpretation. The speaker lauds the eagle and the mole; she admonishes those who would opt for camaraderie, companionship, and conformity. The tone is judgmental and imperative, and this gives a strong sense of appropriateness and weight to the speaker's advice. Tossing advice at the reader like a confident, confetti-throwing partygoer, the speaker begins her counseling session with the reader by saying that the herd reeks and the flock is polluted; however, the eagle is stoic. The poem seems to be moving toward a clear judgment of humanity, but the tone shifts slightly in the second stanza, and following that shift, ambivalence reigns.

### "S"

#### SHIFT

(Note shifts in speakers and attitudes.)

The herd reeks. The flock is "polluted." The pack is "lathered." The sheep are "steaming." However, the eagle is "stoic"; his cliff is "inviolable." The mole is "velvet." It seems pretty straightforward: together is bad, and alone is good. However, word choice in "The Eagle and the Mole" tips off the reader that the speaker's attitude may be ambivalent. Perhaps the herd reeks, but the speaker also says that the crowd has "warmth", and "warmth" is a comforting word. Also, the speaker's description of the eagle as "stoic" carries the connotation of the conscious choice of an individual to avoid dealing with human emotion; this makes the reader doubt the advisability of being like the eagle. In the third stanza, "flocks are folded warm" and "herds to shelter run." Meanwhile, the eagle "stares at the sun." An analysis of this word choice reveals that the speaker may be hinting that warm shelter could possibly be more pleasant and satisfying than staring into the sun with a defiant, fearless attitude. The fifth stanza introduces the image of the mole, possibly indicating a shift in attitude from the earlier image of the high-flying eagle. The last stanza lists the reasons for choosing to live underground as follows: One will be with tree roots, stones, and buried bones. This image is somewhat less than comforting.

**"T"**

**TITLE**

**(Examine the title again, this time on an interpretive level.)**

The eagle is strong and self-reliant; however, he is unfulfilled emotionally as he glares fearlessly at the sun. The mole is velvet and has an unspotted soul; however, he has only roots, rocks, and bones for companions. The eagle and the mole are very different, but they are also alike.

**"T"**

**THEME**

**(Determine what the poet is saying.)**

It is likely that Elinor Wylie wrote "The Eagle and the Mole" as she was trying to sort out in her own mind just exactly what her role in life should be. The speaker in the poem notes that crowds reek and steam, but they also provide warmth and shelter. She shows that the eagle lives the life of a powerful individual, and the mole lives the quiet life of a contemplative individual. The eagle keeps his life private and free from emotion; therefore, he is less human, but more in control. The mole avoids the polluted, lathered crowd, but all he has for friends are roots, rocks, and bones. The poet indicates that every choice in life opens some doors and shuts others, but it is up to the individual to make the choice and live with the consequences.

