

POETRY ANALYSIS

using a TP-CASTT

DIRECTION: Complete the following organizer to complete a step-by-step analysis of the assigned poem. Remember T = Title, P = Paraphrase, C = Connotation, A = Attitude/Tone, S = Shift, T = Title (again), T = Theme.

T

Answers may vary here but students might mention:

- The use of "We" to reflect that it's about a group of people
- That masks is not plural - so it's not a lot of different masks but a group of people - "We" - who wear just one mask
- What masks do - hide people's true identities

P

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
We wear the mask!

Stanza: All about the mask that hides faces and emotions. That people behind the mask are suffering but putting on a brave face instead of a literal mask.

Stanza: Why should the world know the truth when they seem content with the lie. And we're happy to show them only part of us and it's the part we want 'them' to see.

Stanza: We appear happy but it's not the whole picture. We sing or express ourselves but everything about everything is vile - horrible. So we let the world think of us as fine and happy through a facade.

C

Personification - The mask rather than the person "grins and lies" (line 1) and then this is carried through the poem.

Imagery with metaphors - "With torn and bleeding hearts we smile" (line 4)

Repetition with the word "but" in stanza 3 that adds a juxtaposition/contrast between what is and is not.

Rhyme pattern - use of a lot of rhymes with an "i" sound that then has the rhyme scheme disrupted with the word mask. Draws more attention between self and the mask or disguise that the person presents outwardly.

A

The attitude or tone of the poem is despairing, anger, grief, and sadness. The poem itself is not overtly sad but rather in the consideration of the message and imagery it has a feeling of hopelessness. There is pain too below the surface (or behind the mask).

S

There is no real shift in this poem except the inclusion of the word “but” in the final stanza that starts to make clear the ‘real’ emotions behind the mask.

T

Depending on students’ background knowledge they may or not be more familiar with the overall subject of the poem - African Americans post-Civil War. The title then would make clear about circumstances of the time for African Americans. The expectation that things are better for people/community but in reality there is still a lot to be remedied.

T

When suffering, many people often hide how they truly feel in order to self-preserve.

The poem makes clear that people may put on a brave front - wearing a mask - but the reality behind the mask is dramatically different.