TONE, STYLE, AND SYNTAX: CONSIDERATIONS FOR ANALYSIS

I. TONE SHIFT: often a change or shift in tone will be signaled by the following:
   - Key words (but, yet, nevertheless, however, although)
   - Punctuation (dashes, periods, colons)
   - Stanza and paragraph divisions
   - Changes in line and stanza or sentence length.

II. STYLE: when analyzing style, consider the following:
   A. Diction (word choice): describe diction by considering the following:
      1. Words may be monosyllabic (one syllable in length) or polysyllabic (more than one syllable in length). The higher the ratio of polysyllabic words, the more difficult the content.
      2. Words may be mainly colloquial (slang), informal (conversational), formal (literary) or archaic (old fashioned).
      3. Words may be mainly concrete (specific) or abstract (general).
      4. Words may be euphonious (pleasant sounding), such as butterfly or cacophonous (harsh sounding), such as pus.
      5. See also your list of words to describe diction
   B. Syntax (sentence structure): describe the syntax by considering the following:
      1. Examine the sentence length. Are the sentences telegraphic (shorter than five words in length), medium (approximately 18 words in length) or long and involved (30 or more words). Does the sentence length fit the subject matter? What variety of sentence length is present?
      2. Examine the sentence patterns.
         a. A declarative sentence makes a statement: The king is sick.
         b. An imperative sentence gives a command: Stand up.
         c. An interrogative sentence asks a question: Is the king sick?
         d. An exclamatory sentence makes an exclamation: The king is dead!
      3. Are sentences simple, compound, or complex?
         a. A simple sentence contains one subject and one verb: the singer bowed to her adoring audience.

b. A compound sentence contains two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or) or by a semicolon: The singer bowed to the audience, but she sang no encores.

c. A complex sentence contains an independent clause and one or more subordinate clauses: You said that you would tell the truth.

d. A compound-complex sentence contains two or more principal clauses and one or more subordinate clauses: The singer bowed while the audience applauded, but she sang no encores.

C. A loose sentence makes complete sense if brought to a close before the actual ending: We reached Edmonton that morning after a turbulent flight and some exciting experiences. A periodic sentence makes sense only when the end of the sentence is reached: That morning, after a turbulent flight and some exciting experiences, we reached Edmonton.

D. In a balanced sentence, the phrases or clauses balance each other by virtue of their likeness or structure, meaning and/or length: He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.

E. Natural order of a sentence: the sentence is structured so that the subject comes before the predicate: Oranges grow in California. Inverted order (sentence inversion) involves constructing a sentence so that the predicate comes before the subject: In California grow oranges. This is a device in which normal sentence patterns are reversed to create an emphatic or rhythmic effect. Split order of a sentence divides the predicate into two parts with the subject in the middle: In California oranges grow.

F. Juxtaposition is a poetic and rhetorical device in which normally unassociated ideas, words, or phrases are placed next to one another, creating an effect of surprise and wit: The apparition of these faces in the crowd: Petals on a wet, black bought (“In a Station of the Metro” by Ezra Pound).
G. **Parallel structure (parallelism)** refers to a grammatical or structural similarity between sentences or parts of a sentence. It involves an arrangement of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs so that elements of equal importance are equally developed and similarly phrased: *He was walking, running, and jumping for joy.*

H. **Repetition** is a device in which words, sounds, and ideas are used more than once for the purpose of enhancing rhythm and creating emphasis: *...government of the people, by the people for the people...*

I. **A rhetorical question** is a question which expects no answer. It is used to draw attention to a point and is generally stronger than a direct statement: *If Mr. Ferchoff is always fair, as you have said, why did he refuse to listen to Mrs. Baldwin’s arguments?*

J. Examine the following:
   1. sentence beginnings and endings: is there a good variety or does a pattern emerge?
   2. the arrangement of ideas in a sentence. Are they set out in a specific way for a purpose?
   3. the arrangement of ideas is a paragraph: what is the structure?

III. **TREATMENT OF SUBJECT MATTER:** describe the author’s treatment of the subject matter by considering the following: has the author been:
   A. **Subjective**? Are conclusions based on opinions? Are they rather personal in nature?
   B. **Objective**? Are conclusions based on facts? Are they impersonal or scientific?
   C. **Supportive of the main idea**? If so, how does the author support claims? Does the writer:
      1. state opinions?
      2. report experience?
      3. report observations?
      4. refer to sources, such as statements by experts or statistical data?

IV. **FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE:**
   A. **Simile**: a comparison of two difference things or ideas using the words **like** or **as**: a specifically stated comparison, the writer saying one thing is like another: *The warrior fought like a lion.*
   B. A **metaphor** is a comparison without the use of **like** or **as**. The writer specifically states that one thing is another. It is usually a comparison between something that is real or concrete and something that is abstract: *Life is but a dream.*
   C. **Personification** is a kind of metaphor which gives inanimate objects or abstract ideas human characteristics: *The wind cried in the dark.*
   D. **Hyperbole** is a deliberate, extravagant, and often outrageous exaggeration. It may be used for either serious or comic effect: *The shot that was heard 'round the world.*
   E. **Understatement (Meiosis)** is the opposite of hyperbole. It is a kind of irony which deliberately represents something as much less than it really is: *I could probably manage to survive on a salary of $2,000,000 per year.*
   F. **Paradox** is a statement which contradicts itself. It may seem almost absurd. Although it may seem to be at odds with ordinary experience, it usually turns out to have a coherent meaning and reveals a truth which is normally hidden: *The more you know, the more you know you don’t know.*
   G. **Oxymoron** is a form of paradox which combines a pair of contrary terms into a single expression. This combination usually serves the purpose of shocking the reader into awareness: *sweet sorrow.*
   H. A **pun** is a play on words which are identical or similar in sound but which have sharply diverse meanings. Puns may have serious as well as humorous uses when Mercutio is bleeding to death in *Romeo and Juliet,* he says to his friends, “Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man.”
   I. **Irony** is the result of a statement saying one thing while meaning the opposite. Its purpose is usually to criticize: *‘It’s simple to stop smoking. I’ve done it many times.’*
   J. **Sarcasm** is a type of irony in which a person appears to be praising something while he is actually insulting the thing. Its purpose is to injure or hurt: *‘My parents are really cool.’*