

Fixation in analysis of poetry

There is one problem that I have encountered frequently, when marking analyses of poetry, which I would like to bring to your attention, as you make your preparations for the examination. When conducting an analysis of poetry, a fair number of students will tend to fixate on a specific image, figure of speech or idea that they find to be particularly evocative as they go through a poem they are analysing.

While there is nothing wrong with being particularly taken with an image you find striking in a poem, make sure that you always take a step back from such an image and re-examine it in the greater context of the poem. I have come across numerous instances of students taking an image and analysing it out of context, which will normally lead to an incorrect analysis of the specific figure of speech and can, in extreme cases, even taint the entire analysis of the poem, leading to a very poor mark.

Whenever you encounter an image that speaks to you on its own, make sure that you stop yourself and really look at it, in terms of everything else the poet is saying, before you begin to write about it in your essay. Always think of the big picture, when conducting an analysis.