The poem I wanna talk about today is really short with only three stanzas, nine lines but a really long title. I will read the poem first,

# Still Life with Sea Pinks and High Tide

##### by Maura Dooley

Thrift grows tenacious at the tide’s reach.  
What is that reach when the water  
is rising, rising?

Our melting, shifting, liquid world won’t wait  
for manifesto or mandate, each  
warning a reckoning.

Ice in our gin or vodka chirrups and squeaks  
dissolving in the hot, still air  
of talking, talking.

So what I will focus on today is **how the use of image helps convey ideas.**

The analysis will be composed of three parts: **layering, connecting, and understanding.**

### Layering

The poem consists of three stanzas. Each demonstrates an image or what Dooley calls “still lives”:

The first imagery is thrifts, it is a beautiful coastal plant with sweet pink flowers, and it is also known as “Sea pinks”, which Dooley uses in the title.

The second imagery is the melting, shifting, liquid world.

and the third one is the melting piece of ice.

**These imageries actually just layer upon each other, without any extra modifying.**

They may be mysterious or even abrupt, but actually that’s what I like most about the poem.

It’s like I am holding a camera in my hand, at first focusing on a small flower at the beach, then I suddenly zoom out and reveal the whole melting world, and finally I zoom in and in again on a party, on a goblet in someone’s hand, on the melting little piece of ice.

### Connecting

Well, the three scenes in the poem may seem to be totally unrelated but, when you keep reading it you will be able to feel the connection.

The first stanza uses a **rhetorical question** “what is that reach when the water is rising, rising?”. Which naturally leads to the second stanza, the “panorama”.

It shows the whole image of the melting shifting liquid world. So it is placing the first stanza in a broader sense.

And the last “photograph”, also the most seemingly unrelated one, actually continues to talks about the same question of the “melting world”, and it is also a **metaphor** for the problem of deglaciation, even though there are no words like “as if” for connection.

So how the connection works is that you put these different imageries together and they have something in common in nature, like the melting ice and flowers being destroyed, and then they are connected because they all symbolize the destruction of nature, of beauty.

### Understanding

By understanding, I mean like

Just reading the poem over and over, and imagine what’s happening—then what has the author seen and thought, and what she wanna tell you will naturally come to your mind. And that’s the power of imageries.

How Dooley successfully did this is by using various types of imageries: visual imagery, auditory imagery, and also tactile imagery. To create visual imagery, Dooley uses personification like “thrifts growing tenaciously” and “world waiting for manifesto”. For auditive imagery, she uses onomatopoeia, like chirrups and squeaks” and also repetition like “rising, rising” and “talking, talking”. And there’s also tactile imagery like “hot still air.”

And because of these imageries, the poem may say different things to different viewers. For me, I feel like there are two ways to understand the theme.

The first and the more obvious one is that the poem talks about climate changes: deglaciation and rising sea levels caused by global warming. But I prefer to understand the poem in the second way, a more personal way, and that is the author’s melancholy of the destruction of beauty.

The reason for saying that is that there is a kind of sorrow throughout the poem and the way Dooley depicts the thrifts, that they are growing tenaciously, and the way she describes the ice, chirruping and squeaking. I can feel that sympathy, the great pain and emotion when you see those beautiful things going further and further away.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the author uses three images to build the poem, layer them up and then connect them together. She is just describing, revealing, without comments, like a photographer captures single still moments in life. But her thoughts, her feelings are mixed between the lines, the readers can feel it is there.

So that’s it.

Thank you for your attention.