

**This Is a Photograph of Me**

Margaret Atwood, 1939

It was taken some time ago.  
At first it seems to be  
a smeared  
print: blurred lines and grey flecks  
blended with the paper;

then, as you scan  
it, you see in the left-hand corner  
a thing that is like a branch: part of a tree  
(balsam or spruce) emerging  
and, to the right, halfway up  
what ought to be a gentle  
slope, a small frame house.

In the background there is a lake,  
and beyond that, some low hills.

(The photograph was taken  
the day after I drowned.

I am in the lake, in the center  
of the picture, just under the surface.

It is difficult to say where  
precisely, or to say  
how large or small I am:  
the effect of water  
on light is a distortion

but if you look long enough,  
eventually  
you will be able to see me.)

# Poetry Analysis Worksheet

A step-by-step guide to reading and understanding poetry

1. **Title**

- If there is a title – does it define the subject matter of the poem's focus?

2. **First Reading**

- Read the poem silently to gain a first impression.
- What is the narrative in the poem (what is happening?)
- Make some notes on your first impressions.

3. **Re-Reading**

- Read the poem again – carefully, analytically and out loud.
- Take note of punctuation; notice images that stand out; listen to the rhyming pattern and the rhythm of the words

4. **Meaning**

- Identify the obvious meaning and then look for implied meaning (s). What do you think the poet is trying to say?

5. **Consolidation – Putting it all together**

- Read the poem again to consolidate your appreciation of its meaning.

6. **Theme/s**

- Identify the main theme of the poem

7. **Analysis**

- Are there poetic techniques such as: **similes; metaphors; alliteration; personification; onomatopoeia; assonance?**

- Other structures such as: **repetition; tenses; different voices; different themes in stanzas.**

- Use of vocabulary and language? (Find the meaning of words you are not familiar with)

- Listen to the tone of the poem. What is it? Does it change?

- What is the poet's message or intention in writing this poem?

8. **Interpretation**

- What issues are raised about society/relationships or life?



## SUPPLEMENTARY READING

Read a discussion about the major characteristics of Golden Age Crime Fiction.

Web resource: <https://eltdpykla.vdu.lt/bitstream/handle/1/225/ISBN9789955126980.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

### WHAT ARE THE MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF GOLDEN AGE CRIME FICTION?

#### 1. Social realism.

These narratives are set in a specific time and place, which may be fictional but which are based on real societies and periods. The novels are dense with details about villages and houses, furniture, clothing, meals, social structures and the like. Although the cliché that Golden Age stories all take place in a country house or small village is not true, there is a distinct preference for what is called a **closed setting**, a place containing a limited number of people, most of whom know each other to some extent. In addition to villages and country houses, these may be university colleges, places of business, tourist resorts and so on. In any case the writer usually goes to a fair amount of trouble to construct a realistic setting (in the older Golden Age novels a map was often included of the village or a plan of the house where the murder took place). In contemporary crime fiction that continues the Golden Age formula, writers often produce a series set in a specific location, such as the Canadian L.R. Wright's novels set on what is known as the Sunshine Coast of British Columbia in Canada, or Ruth Rendell's Inspector Wexford series set in Suffolk, or the Yorkshire novels of Reginald Hill. Readers often find the detailed portrayal of these realistic worlds as interesting as the crime mystery that is being solved.

#### 2. Moral and ideological values of the dominant class

Typically, in the first examples, even when the detective is from the upper class, Golden Age fiction focuses on the upper middle class of British or American society. Lower-class characters appear, including servants, but are not primary and almost never turn out to be the murderers. The moral and ideological views of the upper middle class are taken for granted as right, and murder is seen as a violation of the social order. Social structures are

rarely questioned: it is assumed that the government, police and other forms of authority, though they may include people who are weak or criminal, are not corrupt or indifferent to crime.

**3. The detective represents and re-establishes order.**

Although the detective may not be a leader in a community, he or she shares middle class values and its ideology. Crime of any kind, but especially murder is seen as a dangerous kind of disorder which disrupts ordinary human relations and the functioning of society. The detective solves the mystery of the crime and by making the solution public and having the criminal arrested, restores order to the system. In very rare cases, the solution is found but the murderer is not directly punished by the state. However, this happens only when the murderer killed a person much more evil than themselves. Even then, the murderer often commits suicide or is said to be suffering from a fatal illness.

**4. The detective solves the mystery without the use of much physical action, but through close observation of places and people, and especially the use of logic and reason.**

While Sherlock Holmes did run about and often search the sites of crime for physical clues, Golden Age detectives rely much more on talking to witnesses and suspects. Detectives like Miss Marple are physically incapable of strenuous physical action, though they are quick to pick up small details that help indicate a person's psychological state. Much of the interest for the reader is in speculating on the list of suspects to guess which one did the crime.

**5. Violence is not described in detail, even when a murder is involved. Nor does the detective usually use or feel threatened by violence.**

Unpleasant details about pools of blood are avoided in this kind of crime fiction, as are forms of murder that include torture. Although other characters are often killed during the course of an investigation, the detective rarely feels at risk, almost never carries a weapon and is not injured in the work of solving the crime.

**6. Romance and love may appear in these novels, and sexual desire is often a motive for crime, but there are few direct depictions of sexuality.**

In the more classical kind of Golden Age fiction there is no romance of any real importance. In Christie's novels her major detectives are not sexual beings, though other writers, like Dorothy Sayers, make her detective fall in love. Nevertheless, more explicit sexual references are definitely censored.

**7. The detective is confident and feels part of his or her society.**

As a series progresses, the detectives tend to be treated as people who are respected investigators of crime by those who know them. In any case, even when others do not show them much respect, the detectives themselves are very sure of their value.

**8. The general tone of these novels is analytical, sometimes ironic, with fear and suspense playing a role, but not always a major one.**

Sometimes there is humour in these novels, and often a distinct element of social satire in the presentation of characters. These are definitely not plots based on strong suspense;

there are always pauses in which the suspects and the crime are discussed and argued about in an intellectual way.

**9. The narratives begin with a crime (often after a short introduction of the place and major characters) and end with a happy ending.**

The ending can be said to be **closed**, as all the mysteries have been solved and readers are given an idea of what will happen to all major characters. They are **happy endings** because good triumphs over evil, the criminal is caught and there will be no more crimes. If there is a romantic narrative, it is now concluded happily as well.