

## Cody's Sample

In the poem, "Introduction to Poetry," the author, Billy Collins (2006), tells his readers that poems are not meant to be analyzed as soon as one reads the poem. Instead, Collins suggests, readers should listen to what the poem says and how it says it instead of trying to force an academic meaning the first time we read the poem. He implies that sometimes it is unnecessary to analyze a poem.

The first stanza of the poem describes his students: "I ask them to take a poem / and hold it up to the light / like a color slide / or press an ear against its hive" (p. 58). Here, Collins describes a poem as a work of art—one to be savored, not deconstructed.

The second section of this poem states, "I say drop a mouse into a poem / and watch him probe his way out, / or walk inside the poem's room / and feel the walls for a light switch" (p. 58). Collins is trying to get across that sometimes the meaning of the poem is ambiguous and takes thoughtful probing of the text.

In the third section, Collins surprises us with a violent description: "But all they want to do / is tie the poem to a chair with rope / and torture a confession out of it. / They begin beating it with a hose / to find out what it really means" (p. 58). Collins describes students who treat a poem with force, not finesse. They assume there is a central meaning, so [they] force it into the poem rather than waiting for understanding.

True meaning will not always be found in the elements of the text in a poem. Descriptions of similes, metaphors, and even "meanings" are representations of what the author says, not what the author actually says. Collins reveals that it is sometimes better just to read than to break down.

### 2. Identify the Main Idea

Cody begins his summary with a statement of the poem's overall message.

### 1. Study the Text

Cody knows the poem comes in both stanzas and implied sections.

### 3. Identify Key Moments

Cody points out the shift in the third section of the poem with this sentence.

### 4. Select Details

Cody quotes specific lines to back up his summarization.

### 5. (Re)Organize

Cody has chosen to summarize one section of the poem at a time and ends by again revisiting the poem's overall message.