

## Annotating Poetry with TP-CASTT

### Suggested Lesson Procedure

#### Day 1 Overview:

1. Begin the lesson by introducing TP-CASTT using the provided PowerPoint presentation. Walk students through each part of the acronym (Title, Paraphrase, Connotation, Attitude, Shifts, Title, Theme), explaining what each step means and how it helps analyze poetry.
2. Next, distribute the poem “Flash Cards.” Using the PowerPoint, guide students through annotating the poem as a whole class. Encourage students to mark up the text by circling, underlining, or highlighting key information on their own papers.

Project the slides onto the board.

(The animation feature should display answers as you click, allowing students time to think and participate before revealing responses)

If possible, project the slides onto a whiteboard without the pull-down screen and invite students to come up and annotate directly on the board using dry erase markers. This keeps engagement high and allows students to actively participate in the annotation process.

Answers may vary—as everyone has different interpretations of poetry.

As you move through the poem, explicitly connect each annotation back to the corresponding part of TP-CASTT. All components are built into the PowerPoint, so use it as your guide for pacing and discussion.

#### Day 2 Overview:

1. Begin by quickly reviewing the TP-CASTT process from the previous day. Clarify any misunderstandings and remind students how each step helps them analyze a poem.
2. Distribute “Oranges” by Gary Soto. Students will work in pairs to annotate the poem using the TP-CASTT framework. Encourage them to reference their notes from the previous lesson and work collaboratively to discuss their thinking.
3. As students work, circulate around the room to monitor progress, answer questions, and guide students who may be struggling.
4. Once students have completed their annotations, bring the class back together for a whole-class review. Go through the poem step-by-step, discussing correct answers and allowing students to share their interpretations.

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## How to Annotate a Poem



First, read the poem's title and consider what it will be about.  
Then, read the poem once without stopping.

Read the poem again, stopping and reflecting on every line and/or stanza and its literal meaning.

Read the poem again this time looking for figurative language and deeper meanings.

A poem is an intricate form of literature that rarely is understood on the first read. So if you don't "get it" right away, that's NORMAL!

The form of a poem is part of its meaning. One should observe all features and techniques of a poem to effectively interpret a poem's meaning.

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## How to Annotate a Poem

Remember the acronym:

T = TITLE

P = PARAPHRASE

C = CONNOTATION

A = ATTITUDE

S = SHIFTS

T = TITLE (AGAIN)

T = THEME

TPCASTT

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## How to Annotate a Poem

Title = Before reading, what might the title mean? What does it imply?

Paraphrase = Translate the poem line-by-line into your own words to understand the literal meaning. What is happening in the poem?

Connotation = What figurative language and imagery is used? What impact does it have? What poetic devices are used?

Attitude = What is the speaker's tone? What feelings does it capture?

Shifts = Are there any changes in attitude or insight? Look for key words, time change, punctuation.

Title Revisited = Re-examine the title. What does the title mean? How does it connect to the theme?


Themes = What is the message, moral, or claim?

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# FLASH CARDS



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Flash Cards

PREVIEW

What does this title make me think of?  
Predict what the poem will be about.

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~~In math I was the whiz kid, keeper~~

~~of oranges and apples. What you don't understand,~~

~~master, my father said; the faster~~

PREVIEW

~~I answered, the faster they came.~~

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PREVIEW

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Paraphrase each section.

PREVIEW

Flash Cards

The speaker is a young child who is very good at math and counting.

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In math I was the whiz kid, keeper

of oranges and apples. What you don't understand,

master, my father said; the faster

I answered, the faster they came.

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PREVIEW

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PREVIEW

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Paraphrase each section.

Flash Cards

PREVIEW

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In math I was the whiz kid, keeper

of oranges and apples. What you don't understand,

master, my father said; the faster

I answered, the faster they came.

The father gives the child math questions, and the quicker the child answers, the more questions the father gives the child.

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Paraphrase each section.

I could see one bud on the teacher's geranium,  
one clear bee sputtering at the wet pane.

The tulip trees always dragged after heavy rain  
so I tucked my head as my boots slapped home.

While sitting in class, the speaker notices a small detail: a single flower bud on the teacher's plant.

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Paraphrase each section.

I could see one bud on the teacher's geranium,  
one clear bee sputtering at the wet pane.

The tulip trees always dragged after heavy rain  
so I tucked my head as my boots slapped home.

After it rains, the trees outside look droopy and weighed down. The speaker walks home, head down, with his boots making loud sounds as he walks.

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Paraphrase each section.

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My father put up his feet after work  
and relaxed with a highball and The Life of Lincoln.

The father comes home from work and relaxes with a drink  
and a book.

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Paraphrase each section.

After supper we drilled and I climbed the dark before sleep, before a thin voice hissed numbers as I spun on a wheel. I had to guess.

Ten, I kept saying, I'm only ten.

After dinner, the father makes the child practice math problems repeatedly. Then the child goes upstairs to bed in the dark and hears a voice.

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Paraphrase each section.

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numbers as I spun on a wheel. I had to guess.

Ten, I kept saying, I'm only ten.

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The child does not always know the answer. The child repeats that he/she is ten years old, as a reminder.

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Connotations

PREVIEW

Flash Cards

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whiz kid: gifted, praised

In math I was the whiz kid, keeper

Figurative language, meaning:  
the kid who handles math word  
problems

of oranges and apples. What you don't understand,

master, my father said; the faster

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I answered, the faster they came.

Repetition "faster"  
- suggests pressure and a cycle of  
anxiety

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### Connotations

Imagery: shows hyper-awareness, and shows the innocence of the child

I could see one bud on the teacher's geranium,

one clear bee sputtering at the wet pane.

The tulip trees always dragged after heavy rain

so I tucked my head as my boots slapped home.

"trees dragged" representation exhaustion and heaviness; mirror emotional weight

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PREVIEW  
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Connotations  
PREVIEW

Shows the father's detachment, routine

My father put up his feet after work

and relaxed with a highball and The Life of Lincoln.

Lincoln is associated with: discipline, hard work, self-made success.

The father is relaxing by reading about Abraham Lincoln, a symbol of achievement and perseverance while also pushing his child to perform academically. It subtly reinforces the high expectations he has for his kid.

The juxtaposition is that the father gets comfort and relaxation, while the child gets work and pressure. It highlights the imbalance between them: the father is allowed to rest and the child is expected to keep performing

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## Connotations

### PREVIEW

"Drilled" connotes military, harshness

Figurative language: the child is still carrying that stress to bed

After supper we drilled and I climbed the dark

before sleep, before a thin voice hissed

personification : threatening, snake-like, sinister

numbers as I spun on a wheel. I had to guess.

Ten, I kept saying, I'm only ten.

Forced to answer, fear of failure

-loss of control  
-being trapped in a cycle  
-dizziness

Repetition: plea for mercy, reminder of innocence

### PREVIEW

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Attitude/Tone

Flash Cards

PREVIEW

In math I was the whiz kid, keeper  
of oranges and apples. What you don't understand,

reflective

pressured

master, my father said; the faster

I answered, the faster they came.

anxious

I could see one bud on the teacher's geranium,

observant

one clear bee sputtering at the wet pane.

stuck

The tulip trees always dragged after heavy rain

defeated

so I tucked my head as my boots slapped home.

gloomy

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Attitude/Tone

PREVIEW

My father put up his feet after work **bitter**

and relaxed with a highball and The Life of Lincoln.

After supper we drilled and I climbed the dark

**overwhelmed**

before sleep, before a thin voice hissed

**stressed**

numbers as I spun on a wheel. I had to guess.

**helpless**

Ten, I kept saying, I'm only ten.

**desperate**

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Flash Cards

Shifts

In math I was the whiz kid, keeper  
of oranges and apples. What you don't understand,  
master, my father said; the faster  
I answered, the faster they came.

I could see one bud on the teacher's geranium,  
one clear bee sputtering at the wet pane.

The tulip trees always dragged after heavy rain  
so I tucked my head as my boots slapped home.

Location of school → Home

The speaker is quiet at school and  
becomes more tense at home.

My father put up his feet after work  
and relaxed with a highball and The Life of Lincoln.  
After supper we drilled and I climbed the dark

before sleep, before a thin voice hissed  
numbers as I spun on a wheel. I had to guess.

Ten, I kept saying, I'm only ten.

The child feels intense pressure → shifts to  
vulnerability and acknowledgement

Realization: she/he understands she/he is just a  
child and the pressure is too much for his/her age

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Flash Cards

Title Revisited

In math I was the whiz kid, keeper

of oranges and apples. What you don't understand,  
master, my father said; the faster

I answered, the faster they came.

I could see one bud on the teacher's geranium,  
one clear bee sputtering at the wet pane.

The tulip trees always dragged after heavy rain

so I tucked my head as my boots slapped home.

My father put up his feet after work

and relaxed with a highball and The Life of Lincoln.

After supper we drilled and I climbed the dark

before sleep, before a thin voice hissed

numbers as I spun on a wheel. I had to guess.

Ten, I kept saying, I'm only ten.

Flash cards are supposed to help a child learn, but here they feel almost like a weapon or a source of stress. They symbolize repetition, control, and pressure.

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# PREVIEW

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### Themes

#### Flash Cards

In math I was the whiz kid, keeper  
of oranges and apples. What you don't understand,  
master, my father said; the faster  
I answered, the faster they came.

**The speaker seems to realize that being good at math is not actually freeing him/her**

I could see one bud on the teacher's geranium,  
one clear bee sputtering at the wet pane.

The tulip trees always dragged after heavy rain  
so I tucked my head as my boots slapped home.

**Message: success brings more demands**

**The poem suggests that when learning becomes tied to perfection, it can create fear instead of confidence**

My father put up his feet after work

and relaxed with a highball and The Life of Lincoln.

After supper we drilled and I climbed the dark

before sleep, before a thin voice hissed

numbers as I spun on a wheel. I had to guess.

Ten, I kept saying, I'm only ten.

**The main theme is that pressure to achieve can take away a child's sense of safety and childhood**

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Name:

Date:

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Annotate the poem "Flash Cards" by Rita Dove

Predict what the poem will be about based on the title:

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"Flash Cards"

Paraphrase Stanza 1:

1 In math I was the whiz kid, keeper  
 2 of oranges and apples. What you don't understand,  
 3 master, my father said; the faster  
 4 I answered, the faster they came.

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5 I could see one bud on the teacher's geranium,  
 6 one clear bee sputtering at the wet pane.  
 7 The tulip trees always dragged after heavy rain  
 8 so I tucked my head as my boots slapped home.

Paraphrase Stanza 2:

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9 My father put up his feet after work  
 10 and relaxed with a highball and The Life of Lincoln.  
 11 After supper we drilled and I climbed the dark

12 before sleep, before a thin voice hissed  
 13 numbers as I spun on a wheel. I had to guess.  
 14 Ten, I kept saying, I'm only ten.

Paraphrase Stanza 3:

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Paraphrase Stanza 4:

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Connotations:

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Empty box for student annotations.

Connotations:

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Attitude:

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Shifts:

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Title Revisited and Explained:

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Themes:

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Name:  
TPCASTT – “Oranges”

Date:

Title prediction:

**Oranges by Gary Soto**

1. The first time I walked
2. With a girl, I was twelve,
3. Cold, and weighted down
4. With two oranges in my jacket.
5. December. Frost cracking
6. Beneath my steps, my breath
7. Before me, then gone,
8. As I walked toward
9. Her house, the one whose
10. Porch light burned yellow
11. Night and day, in any weather.
  
12. A dog barked at me, until
13. She came out pulling
14. At her gloves, face bright
15. With rouge. I smiled,
16. Touched her shoulder, and led
17. Her down the street, across
18. A used car lot and a line
19. Of newly planted trees,
20. Until we were breathing
21. Before a drugstore. We
22. Entered, the tiny bell
23. Bringing a saleslady
24. Down a narrow aisle of goods.
25. I turned to the candies
26. Tiered like bleachers,
27. And asked what she wanted —
28. Light in her eyes, a smile
29. Starting at the corners
30. Of her mouth. I fingered
31. A nickel in my pocket,
  
32. And when she lifted a chocolate
33. That cost a dime,
34. I didn't say anything.
35. I took the nickel from
36. My pocket, then an orange,
37. And set them quietly on
38. The counter. When I looked up,
39. The lady's eyes met mine,
40. And held them, knowing
41. Very well what it was all
42. About.

Paraphrase Stanza 1:

Paraphrase Stanza 2:

Paraphrase Stanza 3:

43. Outside,
44. A few cars hissing past,
45. Fog hanging like old
46. Coats between the trees.
47. I took my girl's hand
48. in mine for two blocks,
49. Then released it to let
50. Her unwrap the chocolate.
51. I peeled my orange
52. That was so bright against
53. The gray of December
54. That, from some distance,
55. Someone might have thought
56. I was making a fire in my hands.

Paraphrase Stanza 4:

Connotations:

Attitude:

Shifts:

Title:

Themes: