Analyze Form: Ode

“Ode to Enchanted Light”

Pablo Neruda’s poem is an ode, a poem that deals with serious themes, such as justice, truth, or beauty. An ode praises or celebrates its subject, which is usually a person, event, thing, or element in nature. The word ode comes from the Greek word aeidein, which means to sing or chant. Originally, the ode was written to be accompanied by music and dance. A traditional ode is a long poem with a formal structure, and due to its dignified nature, its language is often formal as well. Many modern poets experiment with the form to make it fresh and interesting for modern readers. What do you notice about the length and arrangement of lines in Neruda’s poem?

The poem is a mix of long and short lines - some just one word long - and one long stanza followed by two shorter stanzas of equal length. The first stanza creates a cascading, tumbling feeling - as if the words are falling down the page in the same way that light is tumbling through the trees. The second stanza has a regular pattern of rhythm - almost like the sound of a cicada. Finally, in the last stanza, the longer middle line emphasizes the image of the “glass overflowing.”

Analyzing the Text
Cite Text Evidence

Support your responses with evidence from the text.

1. Infer What feelings are suggested in lines 1-9 of this poem? How does the poet suggest those feelings?
   A: The lines suggest a feeling of calm, of being transfixed by the light dropping through the tree branches. The poet creates this feeling first with the setting, “Under the trees.” Then, the phrase “a green/latticework of branches” compares the broken pattern of light to the crossed patterns of tree branches. This suggests a peaceful setting. He finishes the stanza with the image of the light as “drifting down like clean/white sand.”
2. **Analyze** A cicada is an insect that makes a high-pitched, continual sound, usually in summer. Reread lines 10-12. What repeated first sounds, or **alliteration**, do you hear, and how are the sounds connected to the poem’s meaning?

   A: The /s/ sounds in “cicada sends/ its sawing song” suggest the repetitious, raspy noise of a cicada itself.

3. **Analyze and Evaluate** Does this poem meet the requirements of an ode? Why or why not?

   A: Yes. The poem expresses an appreciation for how light enhances the beauty of sights and sounds in nature.

**Analyze Form: Lyric Poem**

“**Sleeping in the Forest**” is a lyric poem, a short poem in which a single speaker expresses personal thoughts and feelings. Lyric poetry is a broad category that includes traditional forms such as odes and sonnets, as well as free verse, a form that does not use formal structure or rhyme schemes. In fact, in ancient times, lyric poems were created to be sung. Although they aren’t sung today, lyric poems do have some elements in common with songs, including

- a sense of rhythm and melody
- imaginative word choice, or diction
- the creation of a single, unified impression

What is the single, unified impression conveyed in this poem?

The single impression is of someone blissfully lying on the forest floor at night, listening to the sounds, sights, and feelings of the forest. It’s an image of a child sleeping in his or her mother’s arms.

The poem is free verse. The arrangement of words and lines, line length, or pattern of rhythm and rhyme.
Analyzing the Text
Cite Text Evidence

Support your responses with evidence from the text.

1. **Interpret** Reread the last sentence in the poem. What might the speaker mean by “something better”?
   A: Perhaps sleeping in the forest enriches the speaker so that she is a better person, at one with nature. Perhaps spending a night in the forest has sent the speaker into another realm, better than the world of daylight.

2. **Analyze** Reread lines 5-7. What is compared to “a stone/on the riverbed”?
   Where else does that image appear in the poem?
   A: The sleeping speaker is compared to a stone on the riverbed; both lie still. The image of being in water is reinforced by these words elsewhere in the poem: “floated”, “rose and fell, as if in water.”

3. **Analyze and Evaluate** Identify examples of each of the elements of a lyric poem that appear in “Sleeping in the Forest.” Do you think Oliver's poem is a good example of a lyric poem? Why or why not?
   A: The poem is intimate, expressing the speaker's thoughts and feelings about nature and life, as inspired by a blissful experience sleeping in a forest one night. While the poem is free verse and has no end rhymes, it does have a steady rhythm, suggestive of the breathing of an infant. Word choices such as “the white fires of the stars” and “small kingdoms breathing” are imaginative. It gives an impression of a child sleeping in its mother’s arms.
Determine Meaning

Through figurative language, words are used in an imaginative way to express ideas that are not literally true. The most common types are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simile</th>
<th>a comparison between two unlike things using the word like or as (friendship as sturdy as a tree)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>a comparison of two things that are basically unlike but have some qualities in common; a metaphor does not contain the word like or as (a forest of confused thoughts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personification</td>
<td>the giving of human qualities to an animal, object, or idea (the trees stood guard)</td>
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In the poem “Ode to enchanted light,” the poet Pablo Neruda states that light is “drifting down like clean / white sand.” What type of figurative language does this phrase represent?

This is a simile. It uses the word like to compare the light to “clean white sand.”

Analyzing the Text

Cite Text Evidence

Support your responses with evidence from the texts.

1. **Interpret** Reread lines 13-15 of “Ode to enchanted light.” What type of figurative language is represented here, and what is the comparison being made? What feelings does this evoke in the reader?
   
   A: “The world is a glass overflowing with water” is a metaphor. The image suggests that the world, like overflowing water, is clear, sparkling, fresh, life-giving, and abundant.

2. **Analyze** What is personified in lines 1-5 of “Sleeping in the Forest”? Why might the poet have chosen to use this personification?
A: The earth is personified as a woman wearing dark skirts with pockets. Perhaps the poet is making a connection to the familiar concept of Mother Nature or an earth goddess from mythology, who lovingly cradles and nurtures the speaker during sleep.

3. Compare  Reread lines 8-9 of “Ode” and lines 9-11 of “Sleeping in the Forest.” What similarities do you observe in the poets’ use of language?
A: In Neruda’s poem, “drifting down like clean/white sand” is part of a simile comparing the light dropping through the trees to drifting sand. In Oliver’s poem, “but my thoughts, and they floated/ light as moths among the branches/of the perfect trees,” is a simile comparing the speaker’s thoughts to floating moths. One image conveys downward motion; the other conveys a feeling of floating upward.

4. Analyze  How do the images of light differ in these two poems?
A: In “Ode to enchanted light,” the speaker’s vision of light is the subject of the poem. Light is enchanting, or magical. In “Sleeping in the Forest,” the speaker is in darkness, seeing only “the white fire of the stars.” The phrase “luminous doom” suggests a negative or worrisome connection to something light or glowing.