

SECTION 1: HOW TO BE A BETTER READER (AND VIEWER)

In his perceptive essay titled “Read Like a Reader, Read Like a Writer”

([https://www.ttms.org/PDFs/11%20Read%20Like%20a%20Reader-Writer%20v001%20\(Full\).pdf](https://www.ttms.org/PDFs/11%20Read%20Like%20a%20Reader-Writer%20v001%20(Full).pdf)), Steve Peha makes a distinction between reading as

discerning *what* a writer is saying (reading like a reader) and reading as experiencing *how* the writer is saying it (reading like a writer). Whereas the former depends on questioning, predicting, inferring, connecting, feeling, and evaluating for a reader’s meaning-making, the latter prioritizes ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions as the reader’s primary lenses onto a text. Peha then models both approaches simultaneously in the interpretation of the first several pages of Ben Hippen’s *Eddie Takes Off*. He then offers us the opportunity to continue the explication within this parallel approach. Peha has imaginatively broken down the components of **content** and **form**—the main emphases underpinning all of the assessments in IB English A: Literature and IB English A: Language & Literature.

Ahmet Ahmet offers another angle in his article, “How to Infuse the Arts Into Core Curriculum (and Why It Matters)”

(www.edutopia.org/blog/infuse-arts-into-core-curriculum-ahmet-ahmet). He

argues that “it’s important that you don’t split the knowledge-based learning from the creative devising”. Basically, Ahmet urges us to unify/integrate the critical and creative mindsets and activities so that they become co-dependent. Reading like a writer entails imagining the artistic process that led to the creation of the work you are reading—seeing the written work as the result of a creative process (individual or collaborative) rather than as an artefact purposely designed for the sole purpose of academic analysis.

Being a better reader/viewer entails being attuned to both **process** and **product**—that of the work you are reading and, in turn, your own writing about that work. Seeing both of these as connected can be empowering and remove some of the intimidation that often comes with reading and writing about literature.

Reading like a reader and writer depends on recognizing different kinds of patterns—some are more intellectual/rational, and others are more artistic/conceptual. Working *within* this spectrum is key to your success.

The following four slides can help you recognize literary patterns in a text and develop a working vocabulary for explaining the multiple effects you think these patterns create. You can find a more thorough narrative breakdown of the slides in relation to Li-Young Lee’s poem “The Gift” on pages 195–199 in the Literature Course Companion.

5.2 GUIDED APPROACH TO CLOSE READING

1 Tracing connotative and stylistic patterns

- sound patterns
- rhythmic/metrical patterns
- image patterns
- visual/spatial patterns
 - white/black space
 - vertical/horizontal
- syntactical patterns
- patterns of denotation/connotation
- patterns of punctuation
- patterns of sentence/stanza structure
- patterns of conflict



2 Where/How/Why do these patterns change?



What
are the
patterns?

Where
do they
change?

How
is this
relevant?



3 Appreciating writer's choices

adjective	X	verb	Y
bold	image(ry)	emphasises	the speaker's...
inconsistent	perspective	diminishes	the character's...
menacing	tone	highlights	the writer's...
looming	symbol	enhances	the reader's...
bucolic	setting	contradicts	
formal	phrasing	reverses	
inverted	syntax	informs	
simple	sentence structure(s)	ambiguates	
fastidious	characterisation	clarifies	
childlike	diction	reiterates	
contorted	personification	underpins	
redundant	repetition	exaggerates	
chaotic	punctuation	juxtaposes	
unexpected	paradox	negates	
suggestive	allusion	amplifies	



4 Putting it all together in writing

Look at the first two stanzas of the poem "The Gift" by Li-Young Lee.

Pattern

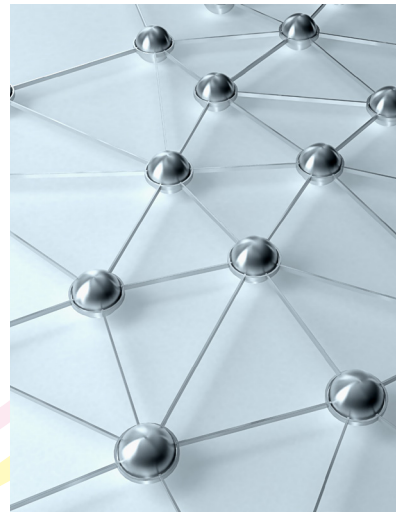
The first stanza begins with an intense reflection of the speaker's childhood experience with her father. "Splinter" and "sliver" bookend five lines, each line comprising around ten syllables. There is an alternation between enjambed and end-stopped lines.

Change

The second stanza brings us into the present moment. Each line is shorter – six or seven syllables per line, increasing the pace and intensity of the narration – as if the speaker is becoming more urgent. This contrasts with the sombre tones evoked by the words "dark", "prayer", and "tenderness".

Impact

The fact that the alternating enjambed lines continue suggests a strong connection between past and present, evoked by the double meaning of "voice still" – her father's "still" voice that is "still" haunting her like "flames".



The Literature Course Companion offers further practical guidance on improving your reading and viewing skills:

- Pages 14–17 identify some habits of mind that will empower you throughout the course.
- Pages 18–20 outline a helpful process of reading reflectively and purposefully.
- Pages 20–47 apply these habits and the process to works representing major genres covered in this course.
- Pages 94–101 introduce ways of approaching graphic novels.

The Language and Literature Course Companion offers opportunities to read, view and reflect on how to be a better reader throughout. You will find some tips about approaching literature and reading critically on pages 6–11, 67 and 79.