“The Wounded Stag”

Passing amidst the deepest shade

Of the wood’s somber heart,

Last night I saw a wounded deer

Laid lonely and apart.

Such light as pierced the crowded boughs

(Light scattered, scant, and dim),

Passed through the fern that formed his couch,

And centered full on him.

Pain trembled in his weary limbs,

Pain filled his patient eye;

Pain-crushed amid the shadowy fern

His branchy crown did lie.

Where were his comrades? where his mate?

All from his death-bed gone!

And he, thus struck and desolate,

Suffered and bled alone.

Did he feel what a man might feel,

Friend-left and sore distrest?

Did Pain’s keen dart, and Grief’s sharp sting

Strive in his mangled breast?

Did longing for affection lost

Barb every deadly dart;

Love unrepaid, and Faith betrayed, --

Did these torment his heart?

No! leave to man his proper doom!

These are the pangs that rise

Around the bed of state and gloom,

Where Adam’s offspring lies!

TP-DASSTT

**Title:** “The Wounded Stag” by Charlotte Bronte

**Paraphrase:** The speaker is in the dark woods at night and sees an injured deer all alone./He is laying on a bed of ferns illuminated by moonlight./The animal is obviously filled with pain, even in his expression./The speaker questions where his companions are, for he is visibly alone./The speaker questions whether the deer will feel effects of loneliness in the way a human would./The speaker continues to wonder if the deer feels betrayed for his loneliness./She asserts that these feelings are more appropriate to man, and such a fate should be left to mankind.

Reaction: The first line sets a somber tone for me, because the woods seem sad and I am sad for the deer and his condition.

**Devices:**

Alliteration: “laid lonely”; “shade… somber”

Diction: “Pierced” is an allusion to the wound.

Repetition: Of pain, 3 times; emphasis; parallel structure; underlying theme of pain emerging

Rhetorical questions cause us to ponder deer and transition to issues related to man.

**Attitude:** The speaker’s attitude is empathetic toward deer, questioning his loneliness—canonizing the deer—noble suffering—versus the concluding chastising of man, who deserves the pain.

**Structure:** The structure helps contribute to tone shifts. ABAB end rhyme scheme after first four lines/first stanza. Punctuation shifts from ; and . to ? to ! The structure also allows her to tell/develop a story without revealing the climax too soon. The first stanza provides introduction, while the next two describe deer with increasing detail and increasing pain. The fourth stanza can now question his loneliness. The fifth now brings in man, and the sixth builds emotion; finally, the seventh condemns man, solidifying the theme.

**Shifts:** Stanzas 1-3 show an empathetic tone. Stanza 4 shifts to ?, so tone becomes reflective, concerned, scornful of those who have left. The last stanza is scornful, bitter, acerbic, and angry. The “No!” interjection helps to indicate the shift.

**Title:** The title deals with the deer in part and ties into her laudatory treatment of the animal.

**Theme:** The fate of loneliness and feelings of betrayal are more appropriate to man/mankind.

TP-DASSTT Instructions:

1. Read the poem aloud to yourself.
2. **T**ITLE: Examine the title before reading the poem, looking for clues about the content of the poem.
3. **P**ARAPHRASE the poem: Translate it into your own words, giving its literal meaning—its denotation. Resist the urge to jump straight into interpretation: poems have literal meanings, too, and often these are crucial to an overall understanding of the work. Remember to work from sentence to sentence rather than from line to line, and be certain to note the connection of the structure (stanzas, quatrains, sestets, etc., as well as enjambment vs. open ended lines) to the presentation of the idea/emotion.
4. **D**EVICES: Look for meaning beyond the literal. Pay particular attention to diction, imagery (especially metaphor, simile, personification, apostrophe) and to shifts in levels of meaning connected to a shift to a new structural segment in the poem. Also look for irony, paradox, understatement, and allusion (particularly Biblical).
5. **A**TTITUDE: Tone is important (see attached tone words). Look also for the speaker’s attitude toward self, toward other(s), and toward the subject.
6. **S**TRUCTURE: Look for particular poem types—especially sonnets—and also look for general structural devices such as stanzas, rhyme scheme, sets of lines, and length of lines. Use of punctuation fits in here, too, particularly as a clue to the meaning and to units of thought. Try to relate all these structural elements to the content and meaning of the poem.
7. **S**HIFTS: Note any shifts in speaker and/or shifts in attitude. Particularly look for words which indicate a shift—words such as *but, however, yet*, and such; also look for words which indicate an idea pattern.
8. **T**ITLE (again): Re-examine the title, this time on an interpretive level.
9. **T**HEME: First list what the poem is about (subjects). Then determine what the poet is saying about each of these subjects (theme). Explain and elaborate as necessary, and be certain your theme is in a complete sentence: don’t simply say “Love” or “It’s about Love.” Instead, it should be something like: “John Donne states that true love is not bound by the physical. Rather, it is a powerful force that despite separation, keeps lovers connected.” Make sure there is a full development of an idea with textual evidence.