Poetry Analysis Worksheet 1

First, read through the whole poem two times slowly, pausing where appropriate.

It sifts from Leaden Sieves - (291)
By Emily Dickinson

It sifts from Leaden Sieves -
It powders all the Wood.
It fills with Alabaster Wool
The Wrinkles of the Road -

It makes an even Face
Of Mountain, and of Plain -
Unbroken Forehead from the East
Unto the East again -

It reaches to the Fence -
It wraps it Rail by Rail
Till it is lost in Fleeces -
It deals Celestial Vail

To Stump, and Stack - and Stem -
A Summer’s empty Room -
Acres of Joints, where Harvests were,
Recordless, but for them -

It Ruffles Wrists of Posts
As Ankles of a Queen -
Then stills its Artisans - like Ghosts -
Denying they have been -

Let's study the poem, line by line. Pay close attention to every word. Answer each question, which is based on the line(s) of poetry above the question, unless otherwise specified.

It sifts from Leaden Sieves -

1. What do you think "It" refers to?

2. What is strange about the capitalization?

3. What kind of punctuation is at the end of the line? What does it make you do when you see it?

4. **Assonance** is the repetition of vowel sounds in words that are close to each other. Notice the short i-sound in *It* and *sifts*? That's assonance. This question is a freebie. More assonance questions coming up later.

5. **Consonance** is the repetition of a consonant sound in words that are close to each other. Notice the s-sound at the end of *sifts* and *Sieves* and the f-sound in *sifts* and *from*. That's consonance.

6. Alliteration is a special type of consonance. **Alliteration** is the repetition of a consonant sound at the beginning of words that are close to each other. Notice the beginning s-sound in *sifts* and *Sieves*. That's alliteration. Another freebie!
7. What is a sieve? If you can, try to find a picture of one on the internet. What does "leaden" mean?

8. Now that you know what "Leaden Sieves" are, what image does the line create in your mind? What do you see when you read the line?

9. What is the speaker comparing "It" (snow) to?

10. What could the speaker be comparing to "Leaden Sieves"? (Hint: Think about what could be described as having a "leaden" color.)

   **It powders all the Wood.**

11. What word is repeated at the beginning of this line? Has the speaker told us yet exactly what "It" is?

12. Notice the repetition of the d-sound: powders Wood. What is that called? (Look back at #5 above.)

13. Again what odd capitalization do you see?

   **It fills with Alabaster Wool**

14. What is alabaster? What texture is alabaster? Is it soft or hard?

15. What texture is wool? What color is wool?

16. Notice the repetition of the short i vowel sound: It fills with. What is that called?

17. In what way might "Alabaster Wool" be oxymoronic? (Remember, an oxymoron is a combination of contradictory words, for example: deafening silence.)

18. What do you notice about the ending of this line and the second line?

   **The Wrinkles of the Road -**

19. Notice the repetition of the r-sound at the beginning of the words "Wrinkles" and "Road." What is the repetition of a consonant sound at the beginning of words that are close together called?

20. Personification is giving objects human qualities. What example of personification do you see in this line?

   Let's move on to the next stanza.

   **It makes an even Face**
21. What word does the line start with? Has the speaker told us what "It" is referring to yet?

22. Is there any assonance? If so, where?

23. Is there any consonance? If so, where?

24. Is there any consonance in this line? If so, where?

25. How does "It" make an even face of mountain and of plain? What does that mean?

26. Is there any personification? If so, what object(s) is being personified and how?

27. What unusual capitalization do you see in this line?

28. Is there any alliteration in these two lines? If so, where does it occur?

29. Is there any assonance? If so, where does it occur?

30. Is there any consonance? If so, where?

31. In these two lines, we see the snow covering the land going from east to west and back east and this landscape is described as an "Unbroken Forehead." What kind of figure of speech or literary device is this?

32. Is there any rhyming, internal or end rhyme, in stanza 2?

33. The speaker still hasn't told us what "It" is but we can guess that "It" refers to snow.

34. Where does the alliteration occur in these two lines?
35. Where does the assonance occur in the second line?

36. What does the second and third "it" refer to?

37. What is snow being compared to? What kind of literary device is this comparison?

It deals Celestial Vail

38. What does "Celestial" mean? What is a "Vail"?

39. What do you think this line means?

40. Where does consonance occur in this line?

41. Is there any rhyming in stanza 3?

42. Where does the alliteration occur in this line?

43. Let's scan this line. To scan a line means to look for the rhythmic pattern of the line. Notice that there is a stress on every second syllable. To Stump, and Stack - and Stem - . You read "Stump," "Stack," and "Stem" more loudly and with more emphasis. That's what stress is. And "to," "and," "and" are unstressed. So, you have a pattern of:

\[
\text{unstressed && stressed\
Stump, && Stack - && Stem -}
\]

Each pair of unstressed stressed is an iamb, which is a type of foot. A foot is a unit of meter. Three of them make a trimeter. So, this line is written in iambic trimeter.

44. How about this line above? Is it written in iambic trimeter?

45. Is there consonance in this line? Where?

46. What is a Summer's Empty Room? What is it a metaphor for? (In other words what is being compared to a summer room that is empty? Read the stanza as a whole to figure it out.)

A Summer’s empty Room -

47. Acres of Joints, where Harvests were,
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Recordless, but for them -

47. According to these two lines, there is no record, no sign that there were harvests in these fields except for "Acres of Joints." What do you think these "Joints" are?

48. Which word is "them" referring back to? In other words, what is the antecedent of "them?"

49. Bonus question: Are these two lines in regular iambic trimeter? (Hint: Look at the first syllable. Is it stressed or unstressed? Look also at the number of feet in the line.)

50. Find an example of consonance in these two lines.

It Ruffles Wrists of Posts
As Ankles of a Queen -

51. Is there alliteration in these lines? Where?

52. Find one example of consonance.

53. Find one example of personification.

54. Find the simile in these two lines. What two things are being compared in the simile?

Then stills its Artisans - like Ghosts -
Denying they have been -

55. Find the assonance that runs through these two lines.

56. Find one example of consonance.

57. Find one example of personification.

58. Find one example of simile.

59. Take a look at the last line of the poem. Which syllables are stressed? which unstressed? What is the meter of the line?
It sifts from Leaden Sieves -

1. What do you think "It" refers to?  snow

2. What is strange about the capitalization?  "Leaden" and "Sieves" are common nouns and are not normally capitalized.

3. What kind of punctuation is at the end of the line?  What does it make you do when you see it?  A dash. It makes me pause.

4. Assonance  is the repetition of vowel sounds in words that are close to each other.  Notice the short i-sound in It and sifts?  That's assonance.  This question is a freebie. More assonance questions coming up later.

5. Consonance  is the repetition of a consonant sound in words that are close to each other. Notice the s-sound at the end of sifts and Sieves and the f-sound in sifts and from. That's consonance.

6. Alliteration is a special type of consonance.  Alliteration  is the repetition of a consonant sound at the beginning of words that are close to each other. Notice the beginning s-sound in sifts and Sieves. That's alliteration. Another freebie!

7. What is a sieve?  If you can, try to find a picture of one on the internet.  What does "leaden" mean?  A sieve is a kitchen utensil with holes or mesh openings used for sifting or straining.  "Leaden" means 1. made of lead; 2. dull or dark gray in color; 3. lacking in sparkle, dull; or 4. depressed or downcast.

8. Now that you know what "Leaden Sieves" are, what image does the line create in your mind?  What do you see when you read the line?  I see a big metal sieve in the sky with white stuff falling from it.

9. What is the speaker comparing "It" (snow) to?  flour

10. What could the speaker be comparing to "Leaden Sieves"? (Hint: Think about what could be described as having a "leaden" color.)  heavy gray skies

   It powders all the Wood.

11. What word is repeated at the beginning of this line?  Has the speaker told us yet exactly what "It" is?  "It" is repeated. No, the speaker has not told us yet.

12. Notice the repetition of the d-sound: powders Wood. What is that called?  (Look back at #5 above.)  consonance

13. Again what odd capitalization do you see?  Wood is capitalized though it is normally not.

   It fills with Alabaster Wool

14. What is alabaster? What texture is alabaster?  Is it soft or hard?  Alabaster is a white mineral used for sculpture. It is hard.

15. What texture is wool?  What color is wool?  Wool is soft and fluffy and white or grayish.

16. Notice the repetition of the short i vowel sound:  It fills with. What is that called?  assonance

17. In what way might "Alabaster Wool" be oxymoronic?  (Remember, an oxymoron is a combination of contradictory words, for example:  deafening silence.)  Alabaster and wool are opposite in texture. One is hard while the other is soft and fluffy.
18. What do you notice about the ending of this line and the second line? They look and sound similar but do not rhyme.

**The Wrinkles of the Road**

19. Notice the repetition of the r-sound at the beginning of the words "**Wrinkles**" and "**Road**." What is the repetition of a consonant sound at the beginning of words that are close together called? alliteration

20. Personification is giving objects human qualities. What example of personification do you see in this line? An object "Road" is given the human trait of "Wrinkles."

Let's move on to the next stanza.

**It makes an even Face**

21. What word does the line start with? Has the speaker told us what "It" is referring to yet?

The line starts with "It." And no the speaker has not told us what "It" is referring to.

22. Is there any assonance? If so, where?

The long a-sound is repeated in "**makes**" and "**face**."

23. Is there any consonance? If so, where?

There is a repetition of the s-sound at the end of "**make**s" and "**face**."

**Of Mountain, and of Plain**

24. Is there any consonance? If so, where? There is the n-sound in "**Mountain**," "**and**" and "**Plain**."

25. How does "It" make an even face of mountain and of plain? What does that mean?

The snow covers the mountain and the plain giving it a smooth even surface.

26. Is there any personification? If so, what object(s) is being personified and how?

Mountain and plain are personified because they are each given a "face."

27. What unusual capitalization do you see in this line?

"Mountain" and "Plain" are capitalized though normally they are not capitalized.

**Unbroken Forehead from the East**
**Unto the East again**

28. Is there any alliteration in these two lines? If so, where does it occur?

"Forehead from" --both words start with an f-sound.

29. Is there any assonance? If so, where does it occur? Short u-sound in "**unbroken**," "**unto**," and "**from**." Long o-sound in "**Unbroken**" and "**Forehead.**" Possibly short e-sound in "**Unbroken**," "**Forehead,**"and "**again**."
30. Is there any consonance? If so, where? **N-sound in** "unbroken," "Unto," "again." **The t-sound in** "East," "Unto" and "East".

31. In these two lines, we see the snow covering the land going from east to west and back east and this landscape is described as an "Unbroken Forehead." What kind of figure of speech or literary device is this? **Personification**

32. Is there any rhyming, internal or end rhyme, in stanza 2? "Mountain" and "again" rhyme and "Plain and "again" almost rhyme.

33. The speaker still hasn't told us what "It" is but we can guess that "It" refers to snow.

34. Where does the alliteration occur in these two lines? **The r-sound in Wraps, Rail, Rail**

35. Where does the assonance occur in the second line? **the short i-sound: Till, it, is, in**

36. What does the second and third "it" refer to? **the Fence in line one**

37. What is snow being compared to? What kind of literary device is this comparison? **Snow is being compared to fleece. It is a metaphor.**

38. What does "Celestial" mean? What is a "Vail"? "Celestial" means of or having to do with the skies or heavens. "Vail" is another spelling for "veil," a covering for the head and face.

39. What do you think this line means? **The snow covers the earth like a veil from the heavens.**

40. Where does consonance occur in this line? **The l-sound is repeated in "deals," "Celestial" and "Vail." There is also a repetition of the s-sound in "deals" and "Celestial."**

41. Is there any rhyming in stanza 3? **"Rail" rhymes with "Vail."**

42. Where does the alliteration occur in this line? **The beginning st-sound in "Stump," "Stack" and "Stem."**

43. Let's **scan** this line. To **scan** a line means to look for the rhythmic pattern of the line. Notice that there is a stress on every second syllable. To **Stump, and Stack - and Stem -**. You read "Stump," "Stack," and "Stem" more loudly and with more emphasis. That's what **stress** is. And "to," "and," "and" are **unstressed**. So, you have a pattern of: **unstressed stressed| unstressed stressed| unstressed stressed**

**To Stump, and Stack - and Stem -**

Each pair of unstressed stressed is an **iamb**. Three of them make a trimeter. So, this line is written in iambic trimeter.
A Summer's empty Room -

44. How about this line above? Is it written in iambic trimeter? Yes.

45. Is there consonance in this line? Where? The m-sound in "Summer's," "empty" and "Room"

46. What is a Summer's Empty Room? What is it a metaphor for? (In other words what is being compared to a summer room that is empty? Read the stanza as a whole to figure it out.) It is a metaphor for the fields, which are bare in winter after all the crops have been harvested in the fall.

Acres of Joints, where Harvests were,
Recordless, but for them -

47. According to these two lines, there is no record, no sign that there were harvests in these fields except for "Acres of Joints." What do you think these "Joints" are? They are the stubble left over after crops have been harvested.

48. Which word is "them" referring back to? In other words, what is the antecedent of "them?" Joints.

49. Bonus question!: Are these two lines in regular iambic trimeter? (Hint: Look at the first syllable. Is it stressed or unstressed?) No, "Acres" is not an iamb because the stress is on the first syllable instead of the second. The same with "Record." Also, in the first of these two lines, there are 4 feet instead of 3.

It Ruffles Wrists of Posts
As Ankles of a Queen -

50. Find an example of consonance in these two lines. The r-sound is repeated in: Acres, where, Harvests, were, Recordless. The s-sound in: Acres, Recordless. The ts-sound in: Joints, Harvests.

51. Is there alliteration in these lines? Where? Ruffles, Wrists

52. Find one example of consonance. S-sound in Ruffles, Wrists, Posts, As, Ankles, Ts-sound in: Wrists, Posts, N-sound in: Ankles, Queen.

53. Find one example of personification. First line above gives an object, posts, the human feature, wrists.

54. Find the simile in these two lines. What two things are being compared in the simile? Wrists of Posts are being compared with the ankles of a queen.

Then stills its Artisans - like Ghosts -
Denying they have been -

55. Find the assonance that runs through these two lines. The short i-sound in: stills, its, Artisans, Denying, been.

56. Find one example of consonance. The s-sound in: stills, Artisans, Ghosts. The ts-sound in: its, Ghosts. The final n-sound in: Then, Artisans, been.

57. Find one example of personification. Snow is given the human quality of having artisans under its service. Or alternatively, snow itself is composed of many artisans. Snow is given the human quality of "denying."

58. Find one example of simile. The first line above is a simile. Snow's artisans are compared to ghosts.
59. Take a look at the last line of the poem. Which syllables are stressed? which unstressed? What is the meter of the line?
Every second syllable is stressed. The meter is iambic trimeter.

Denying they have been.