

Annotating

Annotating can help you develop a deeper understanding of a text and can be very useful in developing your writing. You can make annotations in your textbook, or you can use the comment and highlighting features in Microsoft Word as I have done here. The advantage of this is that you can save the poem and your comments and use them both when you begin writing about the poem. You can also add or erase highlighted areas.

A narrow fellow in the Grass

Occasionally rides -

You may have met Him - did you not

His notice sudden is -

Comment: Snake? Why not use the word snake?

Comment: As in giving notice? Why not warning?

The Grass divides as with a Comb -

A spotted shaft is seen -

And then it closes at your feet

And opens further on -

Comment: Unusual word order. Captures the suddenness. The repetition of the s sound imitates the sound of the snake.

Comment: Simile. Snake going through the grass.

He likes a Boggy Acre

A floor too cool for Corn -

Yet when a Boy and Barefoot -

I more than once at Noon

Have passed, I thought, a Whip Lash

Unbraiding in the Sun

When stopping to secure it

It wrinkled, and was gone -

Comment: The speaker of the poem is a man remembering an experience as a boy.

Comment: Simile. It seems natural for the speaker to pick up a whip, an instrument used to control horses and punish people, but it is not natural to pick up a snake. Also gives a sense that the snake appears to be one thing but is something else.

Several of Nature's People

I know, and they know me -

I feel for them a transport

Of cordiality -

Comment: ? Transport of cordiality? Change in diction. Seems very formal compared to previous paragraph. The speaker is going from a boyhood memory to an adult observation.

But never met this Fellow

Attended, or alone

Without a tighter breathing

And a Zero at the Bone -

Comment: Interesting phrase. Could mean "cold" or "nothing." The speaker describes a reaction that is a reflex. He licks some of nature's creatures but not the snake. Interesting view of nature. The speaker seems ambivalent. The speaker can feel "close" to nature but also be instinctively afraid. Perhaps the natural world can change its shape like the snake.