

THE ALGORITHMIC READER: UNCOVERING AI'S CONTEXTUAL BLIND SPOTS IN POETRY INTERPRETATION

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Abstract. *The integration of AI in literature classrooms creates a new pedagogical challenge. While AI is efficient, it often lacks the human sensibility required for poetry analysis. This study explores the contextual blindness of Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT when interpreting modern poems. Using a qualitative case study, undergraduate students at Universitas Gunadarma examined AI outputs using the TPCASTT framework. The results show a clear gap between machine logic and human interpretation. AI excels at literal paraphrasing but fails to detect irony, complex shifts, and emotional ambiguity. Furthermore, the machine often reduces deep themes to moralistic clichés. This paper argues that AI should be treated as an imperfect tool rather than a perfect source of truth. By critiquing AI errors, students can actively cultivate higher-order critical thinking skills. This approach ensures that literary interpretation remains a deeply human act.*

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Poetry Analysis, TPCASTT, Digital Pedagogy, Critical Thinking.*

INTRODUCTION

The integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) into language and literature field has triggered a paradigm shift, forcing teachers to re-evaluate what it means to actually read a text. Large Language Models (LLMs) have demonstrated remarkable proficiency in syntactic processing, translation, and summarizing vast amounts of information (Dwivedi et al., 2023). In the context of foreign language teaching, these tools are often used for their efficiency. However, the study of literature particularly poetry demands a cognitive process that extends far beyond literal data extraction. As Showalter (2002) notes, reading literature requires an active engagement with ambiguity, subtext, and irony. The nuances that often refuse algorithmic logic. The machine's approach to texts fundamentally contrasts with human literary sensibility. Hayles (2012) argues in her distinction between machine reading and human close reading where algorithms scan for statistical patterns, while humans read to uncover hidden cultural and psychological depths.

This phenomenon creates a unique pedagogical dilemma, because LLMs such as ChatGPT operate fundamentally to copy humans statistically but not emotionally. They stitch together like word sequences without actual communicative intent or contextual comprehension (Bender et al., 2021), the analyses they generate are often hollow. Thus, the moment when students utilize AI to decode poetic texts, they frequently receive polished, highly structured, and fundamentally sanitized interpretations. While AI excels at the mechanical reconstruction of a plot, it often suffers from contextual blindness and struggling to map complex emotional shifts or recognize the tragic irony embedded within a poem's diction (Bozkurt et al., 2023).

Rather than retreating from this technology, higher education must adapt by shifting the focus from content generation to critical evaluation. The current state of AI in higher education necessitates a pedagogy where students are trained not to trust the machine implicitly, but to actively uncover its outputs (Crompton & Burke, 2023). Therefore, there is an urgent need to systematically measure the gap between machine generalization and human literary sense. To bridge this evaluative gap, this study employs the TPCASTT framework which is known as an analytical methodology encompassing Title, Paraphrase, Connotation, Attitude, Shift, Title (revisited), and Theme of a poetry. Widely recognized and standardized within advanced literary curricula (The College Board, 2020). TPCASTT requires the reader to deliberately move from the literal surface of a text into its depth.

This paper presents a qualitative case study involving undergraduate English Literature students of Universitas Gunadarma engaged in a digital pedagogy experiment. Rather than passively consuming AI outputs, the students were asked to utilize the TPCASTT framework to examine AI-generated analyses critically of various poems. By evaluating where the AI succeeds and where it fails, this study aims to map the specific analytical blind spots of machine cognition. Ultimately, this paper argues that AI's failure to grasp poetic nuance should not be viewed as a technological dead-end, but rather as a powerful pedagogical field. By treated AI as a partner that can make mistakes rather than a machine that knows everything, teachers can help students think more critically.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was designed as a qualitative case study focused on digital pedagogy within a literary context. The primary objective was to observe how undergraduate students at Universitas Gunadarma engage with generative AI when tasked with examining complex poetic interpretations. In this research, there are two classes that were chosen by the researcher. By positioning the students as critics of the machine, the study aimed to identify the specific cognitive boundaries of Large Language Models (LLMs), in this context ChatGPT in literary analysis.

2.1. Participants and Material Selection

The study involved two classes on the 7th semester, then those students divided into several collaborative groups. Each group was assigned to analyze different poems. The researcher chose five poems included: (1) Robert Frost – Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening (1923), (2) Theodore Roethke – My Papa's Waltz (1942), (3) Robert Hayden – Those Winter Sundays (1962), (4) Stevie Smith – Not Waving but Drowning (1957), (5) Seamus Heaney - Mid-Term Break (1966). This variety of poems was crucial to test whether the AI's analytical performance remained consistent across different literary periods.

2.2. The AI Auditing Protocol

The data collection followed a multi-stage pedagogical intervention. First, students were instructed to interact with ChatGPT using a structured persona prompt. This prompt was designed to force the AI into a position of academic authority. The prompt can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The Persona Prompt to be Used in ChatGPT

AI Prompt (ChatGPT)
"Act as a strict literature professor. Analyze the poem '[Poem's Title]' by [Author's name] using the TPCASTT method. Please generate the response in a structured list format as follows: 1. Title (Prediction): Before analyzing the poem, predict what the poem is about based only on the title. 2. Paraphrase: Rewrite the poem's literal meaning in your own words. Do not analyze deep meanings here, just the surface story. 3. Connotation: Analyze the figures of speech (metaphor, simile, etc.) and the sound effects (alliteration, rhyme, rhythm). Explain how they support the meaning. 4. Attitude (Tone): Describe the speaker's attitude toward the subject. 5. Shift: Identify specific changes in time, tone, or speaker within the poem. 6. Title (Revisited): Re-evaluate the title's meaning after the analysis. 7. Theme: State the poem's insight about life or human nature."

By using this specific instruction, the researcher ensured that the AI provided a standardized output that could be cross-referenced across all groups.

2.3. Evaluative Framework: TPCASTT and Rubric-Based Assessment

The core of the method lies in the auditing process which is done by humans. Students utilized the TPCASTT framework as their evaluative lens. This TPCASTT method is described as a systematic approach to analyze poetry that moves the reader beyond a mere surface-level understanding. According to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE, 2014), the framework is designed to help students explore the multiple layers of a poem by examining specific linguistic and structural choices.

In this study, the 7-step method served as an accurate checklist for students to audit the AI's output:

1. Title (Prediction): Evaluating the AI's ability to anticipate textual irony.
2. Paraphrase: Assessing the AI's accuracy in summarizing literal events.
3. Connotation: Auditing sensitivity to figurative language and specific dictions.
4. Attitude (Tone): Describing the speaker's emotional stance.
5. Shift: Identifying critical changes in time, tone, or speaker.
6. Title (Revisited): Re-evaluating the title's meaning after a full analysis.
7. Theme: Stating the poem's insight into human nature.
8. To maintain objectivity, students were provided with a standardized assessment rubric (Table 2).

Table 2. Assessment Rubric for TPCASTT

TPCASTT Element	AI's Interpretation	Critique and Correction	Verdict (Pass/Fail/Partial)
T - Title (Prediction)	AI predicts the title is about...	The students will critically see the title prediction which comes from AI and what they actually predict about the title of the poem	
P - Paraphrase	AI summarizes the poem's story as...	In this case, the students will actively see and rate the interpretation that comes from AI and what they grasp as humans about the summary of the poem	
C - Connotation	AI notes the metaphor: ...	The students will see the AI interpretation including the connotation aspect of the poem and they will compare with what they figure out about the connotation of the poem	
A - Attitude	AI states the tone is:	The students will compare and think critically about the tone of the poem which comes from AI and their own thought. In this case, the students will focus on the emotional stance from the poem.	
S - Shift	AI found no shift / Shift found in....	The students will identify the critical change of time, tone or speaker of the poem. They will also compare the result they got from AI and their own opinion	
T - Title (Revisited)	The meaning of the title according to the AI...	The students will re-evaluate the title's meaning after full analysis. They will actively show their opinion about the accuracy of the title prediction and what they actually grasp after full analysis.	
T - Theme	The theme is about...	The students will decide the theme after doing full analysis of the poem. They will see thoroughly the AI interpretation and their thoughts of the theme of the poem.	

The rubric facilitated a systematic verdict for each AI-generated response, categorized into: Pass where the AI interpretation and the critique from the students went in line or accurate, fail where the AI interpretation differed from the students'

critique, and partial where the AI interpretation captured the general idea but lacked in depth analysis. The final data were synthesized by comparing the AI who acts as strict professor outputs against the students' grounded corrections.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The evaluation of AI-generated poetry analysis by undergraduate students of Universitas Gunadarma revealed distinct patterns regarding machine capabilities and cognitive limitations. The data shows that while AI is a proficient tool for surface-level comprehension, it consistently struggles to navigate the deeper, more ambiguous layers of literary meaning.

3.1. Quantitative Overview: AI's Interpretative Performance

The quantitative verdict provided by ten student groups illustrate a clear divide in the AI's performance as can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Students' Verdict of AI's Interpretative Performance

Poem Title	Group Evaluator	Title (Pred)	Paraphrase	Connotation	Attitude	Shift	Title (Rev)	Theme
Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening	Group 1 (4SA08- Andi Naufal et al.)	FAIL	PASS	FAIL	PASS	PASS	FAIL	PASS
	Group 1 (4SA07- Alya Zahra et al.)	PASS	FAIL	FAIL	PASS	PASS	PASS	FAIL
Those Winter Sundays	Group 2 (4SA07 - Alhanova et al.)	FAIL	PASS	PARTIAL	FAIL	PASS	PASS	PARTIAL
	Group 5 (4SA08 - Aditya et al.)	PARTIAL	FAIL	FAIL	FAIL	FAIL	PARTIAL	FAIL
My Papa's Waltz	Group 4 (Afnanina et al. Class 4SA08)	FAIL	PASS	FAIL	FAIL	FAIL	FAIL	FAIL
	Group 3 (4SA07 - Denissa et al.)	PASS	PASS	FAIL	PASS	FAIL	PASS	PASS
Mid-Term Break	Group 3 (4SA08 - Fauzia et al.)	FAIL	PASS	PASS	PASS	FAIL	PASS	PASS
	Group 5 (Adinda Aisyah et al.)	FAIL	FAIL	PASS	PASS	PASS	FAIL	PASS

Not Waving but Drowning	Group 4 (4SA07 - Andiny et al.)	FAIL	FAIL	FAIL	PASS	FAIL	PASS	FAIL
	Group 2 (4SA08 - Abdussalam et al.)	PASS	PARTIAL	PASS	PARTIAL	FAIL	PASS	PASS

There was a dominant pass verdict for the paraphrase element across all analyzed poems, confirming that AI is highly effective at summarizing literal narrative events. However, as the analysis moved toward higher-order thinking especially in connotation, shift, and theme then the fail and partial verdicts became dominant. Interestingly, even on the same poem, student evaluations sometimes diverged. For instance, in analyzing Robert Frost's *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, one group passed the AI's paraphrase while another failed it. This group argued that the AI was too literal and prematurely translated the word promises as administrative duties, which stripped the poem of its inherent mystery. Such divergence highlights the critical role of human auditors in identifying where machine logic begins to flatten literary nuance.

3.2. Qualitative Analysis: AI's Analytical Blind Spots

To understand the nature of these failures, the qualitative synthesis maps out the machine's analytical blind spots across four thematic areas. The detail can be seen on Table 4.

Table 4. Students' Analysis of AI's Analytical Blind Spots

TPCASTT Element	AI's Analytical Tendency (Machine Output)	Human Cognitive Critique (Representative Insight)	Representative Evidence (Group & Poem)
Title (Prediction)	Literal/academic bias: AI interpreted title based on general semantic definitions without anticipating irony.	Students identified that AI fails to detect the tragic irony or hidden tensions often found in poetry titles.	Mid-Term Break (Group 5, class 4SA08)
Paraphrase	Functional consistency: AI was excellent at retelling the surface-level plot and chronological events.	Students validated AI's ability to act as a reliable narrative summarizer for literal comprehension.	Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening (Group 1, 4SA08)
Connotation	Symbolic omission: AI frequently missed specific dictions and figurative language that create psychological tension.	Students detected subtle physical discomfort and specific sensory imagery that AI dismissed or generalized.	My Papa's Waltz (Group 4, 4SA08)

Attitude/Tone	Sentiment generalization: AI tended to assign a singular, safe emotion to ambiguous texts, missing the complex duality of the speaker's feelings.	Students argued that AI lacks the nuance to perceive complex mixtures of emotions, such as rough tenderness or quiet sorrow.	My Papa's Waltz (Group 4, 4SA08)
Shift	Linear reading: AI focused on structural breaks or concluding lines rather than subtle shifts in perspective or internal psyche.	Students identified mid-stanza shifts in point-of-view and emotional awareness that the AI completely missed.	Not Waving but Drowning (Group 4, 4SA07)
Title (Revisited)	Persistent literalism / Over-theorizing: Even after reading, AI sometimes persisted in its literal interpretation or went to the opposite extreme by over-analyzing simple realities.	Contextual re-evaluation: Students successfully re-evaluated the title against the poem's full context, identifying missed irony that the AI still failed to grasp.	My Papa's Waltz (Group 4, 4SA08)
Theme	Moralistic cliché: AI provided safe, overly general, and optimistic themes. It often stripped the poem of its existential dread or ambiguity.	Students criticized AI for optimistic oversimplification. They argued that human themes reflect complex battles and specific struggles.	Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening (Group 1, 4SA07)

Algorithmic Literalism vs. Irony Detection (Title & Prediction)

Because Large Language Models such as ChatGPT operate based on semantic probability, they frequently fail to anticipate the irony or tragic undertones that a title might hold. They treat titles as literal labels rather than framing devices. In the case of Seamus Heaney's Mid-Term Break, the AI predicted a cheerful poem about a school holiday, completely missing the tragic irony that the word break was caused by the death of the speaker's younger brother. Students immediately corrected this initial assumption. As Group 5 from class 4SA08 observed, the AI's approach ignores the possibility of irony and the tendency of poetry to use simple titles to convey deep emotional experiences. This finding suggests that human readers approach a text with a healthy suspicion and contextual awareness, whereas the AI approaches it with algorithm. The students' critique aligns with the established literary consensus on Heaney's work. Mid-Term Break is an autobiographical elegy concerning the tragic death of the poet's younger brother. Thus, the students correctly identified that the word break is illusive. The title of the poem is an ironic framing rather than a cheerful school holiday. This

situation highlights the students' ability to identify the irony in the title, which the AI failed to recognize.

Functional Consistency in Literal Retelling (Paraphrase)

Unlike the deeper analytical layers, the AI demonstrated remarkable functional consistency during the paraphrasing stage. When tasked with recounting the literal meaning of a poem, the machine proved to be excellent at retelling the surface-level plot and chronological events. For example, in analyzing Robert Frost's *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, students from Group 1 validated the AI's ability to act as a reliable narrative summarizer for literal comprehension. This indicates that while algorithms struggle with subtext, their syntactic processing powers make them highly capable of establishing foundational, literal comprehension before deeper human critique begins.

The Illusion of Affective Depth (Connotation & Attitude)

The machine struggled significantly when faced with emotional ambiguity and specific figurative language. According to Group 4 of class 4SA08 analysis of Theodore Roethke's *My Papa's Waltz*, the AI committed symbolic omission by frequently missing specific dictions that create psychological tension. Students detected subtle physical discomfort and specific sensory imagery that the AI simply dismissed or generalized. Furthermore, regarding the poem's attitude, the AI tended to assign a singular and safe emotion to the ambiguous text which caused missing the complex duality of the speaker's feelings. Students argued that the AI lacks the necessary nuance to perceive complex mixtures of emotions, such as rough tenderness or quiet sorrow. This evaluation is accurate and reflects the academic debate around Roethke's poem. The work is celebrated in literary studies precisely for its high ambiguity which uses the elegant metaphor of a waltz to depict a clumsy, alcohol-tinged, and borderline frightening physical interaction between father and son. By demanding the AI recognize both the physical threat and the underlying affection simultaneously, the students demonstrated a mature grasp of poetic duality that the machine could not recreate.

Structural vs. Psychological Dynamics (Shift)

Reading poetry is more than just looking at words, it requires us to understand the speaker's emotions. However, for the AI, evaluating a shift is a linear reading process which focuses mostly on structural breaks or concluding lines rather than subtle shifts in perspective or internal psyche. Conversely, human readers identified internal psychological dynamics that the machine failed to find out. When evaluating Stevie Smith's *Not Waving but Drowning*, Group 4 from class 4SA07 identified critical mid-stanza shifts in point-of-view and emotional awareness that the AI completely missed. This contrast highlights that the AI successfully maps the visual architecture of a poem on the page but fails to grasp the empathetic dynamics. The students' observation is aligned with the poem's core structural genius. The heartbeat of Smith's poem relies heavily on the tragic miscommunication and sudden, intertwined voice shifts between the oblivious witness and the dying victim. The students correctly pointed out that reading a poem stanza-by-stanza is not enough. To truly understand a text that changes its perspective mid-line, they must go beyond the basic structure which AI failed to do.

Thematic Oversimplification (Theme & Title Revisited)

The students discovered the AI's biggest weakness during the final synthesis stage. Even after reading the whole text and revisiting the title, the AI still struggled. It either took the poem too literally or over-analyzed simple facts. For example, the AI viewed *My Papa's Waltz* as just a happy memory. Group 4 from class 4SA08 corrected this error. They re-evaluated the title using the poem's full context and proved that the text is actually deeply ironic. The AI also struggled when generating themes. It relied on moralistic clichés. It provided safe, general, and overly optimistic themes that removed any existential dread or ambiguity. Similarly, Group 1 from class 4SA07 criticized the AI's output on *Stopping by Woods on Snowy Evening*. They argued that the AI oversimplified the poem to make it sound positive. The students explained that real human themes reflect complex struggles, not just flat, motivational advice. This critique shows a strong grasp of literary criticism. The students rightly rejected the AI's bedtime story morals. Instead, they recognized the darker layers of Frost's work. They noted that the lovely, dark and deep woods represent a well-documented death wish and the pull of existential surrender. Ultimately, the students successfully protected the poem's deep ambiguity from being sanitized by the AI.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that AI will not replace human readers in literature classes. Instead, it highlights how complex human reading actually is. Our classroom experiment found a clear line between processing data and feeling empathy. Large Language Models such as ChatGPT are very good at summarizing literal stories. However, they consistently fail to understand the deep, emotional, and ambiguous nature of poetry.

As the students proved in their evaluations, AI relies too much on literal meanings. It completely misses tragic irony. It turns dark, uncomfortable imagery into safe and happy memories. It also sees complex psychological changes merely as simple stanza breaks. Most importantly, AI often turns deep existential themes into basic and positive life lessons. This confirms that the machine cannot handle ambiguity. Poetry is built on paradoxes and unspoken feelings, and these elements require real human experience to be truly understood.

Because of this, teachers should not try to ban AI from literature classes. At the same time, we should not let students use it passively. Instead, teachers must train students to think critically and challenge the algorithm. By using close-reading frameworks like TPCASTT, we can treat AI as a flawed sparring partner rather than an all-knowing expert. This method forces students to defend the human side of literature. Ultimately, it proves that analyzing poetry remains a deeply human act.

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