Some quick background on irony, which is going to figure fairly prominently in this poem.

**Irony** is when there is a discrepancy between what appears real or what is expected to be real and what actually is real. Irony is broken down into three categories.

**Verbal Irony:** When someone says the opposite of what she or he means but says it in such a way as to convey its opposite. Think sarcasm. Not all verbal irony is sarcastic but all sarcasm is verbal irony.

*Example:* The teacher’s explanation of irony was an amazing experience, right up there with cleaning the toilet or getting an ingrown toenail removed.

**Situational Irony:** When a situation turns out radically different from what is expected. A surprise ending is the classic example of situational irony.

*Example:* Some examples of situational irony are a riot breaking out at a peace rally, running out of gas while driving a truck for Exxon, or being fired from a tobacco company for smoking on the job.

**Dramatic Irony:** When readers know something a character doesn’t and the character acts in ways to reveal his or her ignorance. Typically, characters say things that are true, but not true in the way they mean it, or act in a way that creates the opposite results of what was intended.

*Example:* In a story called “The Pardoner’s Tale” a character tells a druggist that he needs some poison to kill some rats, rats who are destroying his property. The character thinks he is telling a lie because he is actually planning to poison two characters who are supposed to be his friends. As it turns out, however, the guys he is planning to poison are actually plotting to murder him and steal his share of some money. So this character thinks he is telling a lie, but the audience knows he is actually telling the truth; the characters are rats and they are trying to destroy his property by stealing it.

Things to be mindful of in this poem:

- Diction, Imagery, and Figurative Language (particularly similes, metaphors, personification, and irony)
- Who are the Speaker(s)? What are their relationships with one another, and what are their attitudes?

---

**Incident in a Rose Garden**

*By Donald Justice*

The gardener came running,
An old man, out of breath.
Fear had given him legs.

Sir, I just encountered Death
Just now among the roses.

Thin as a sythe¹ he stood there.
I knew him by his pictures.

He had his black coat on,
Black gloves, a broad black hat.
I think he would have spoken,
Seeing his mouth stood open
As soon as he beckoned, I ran.

I ran until I found you.

Sir, I am quitting my job.

I want to see my sons
Once more before I die.

I want to see California.

---

1. **sythe:** A tool with a long curved blade used for harvesting crops or cutting grass.
We shook hands; he was off.
And there stood death in the garden, 20
Dressed like a Spanish waiter
Who because he likes arriving
at all appointments early
Learns to think himself patient. 25
I watched him pinch one bloom off
And hold it to his nose—
A connoisseur of roses— (irony alert!)
One bloom and then another.
They strewed the earth around him. 30

Sir; you must be that stranger
Who threatened my gardener.
This is my property sir. (irony again)
I welcome only friends here.
Death grinned, and his eyes lit up 35
With the pale glow of those lanterns
The workman carry sometimes
To light the way to dusk.
Now with great care he slid
The glove hand from his right hand (40)
And held that out in greeting,
A little cage of bone.

Sir, I knew your father,  
And we were friends in the end  
As for your gardener,  
I did not threaten him.  
Old men mistake my gestures  
I only mean to ask him  
To show me to his master.  
I take it you are he?

First speaker again.

Unconventional Personification of Death. What does simile (21) suggest? About death? About the speaker?

appointments? Hmmm... think about it, a little foreshadowing perhaps?

Death’s actions (26-29) Both figurative and imagistic: How is the depiction symbolic or emblematic of the character? Might “earth” have a double meaning?

Isn’t death personified always grinning?

Notice the figurative language used to describe the “glow.” How novel but apt.

Awesome metaphor!

Here comes the third and final speaker.

Why does he say he was friends? in the end (get it). Pun (double meaning alert)

Why old men?
I. Diction (can be used to derive tone and mood)

Diction refers to the writer’s word choice. Diction can be used to derive the tone or mood of a piece. Review the poem and analyze the words you circle that demonstrated strong word choice. Determine if the word is positive or negative. Then, place a positive or negative sign next to the circled word and fill in the DJE.

**Tone**- the writer’s or speaker’s attitude toward a subject, character, or audience  
**Mood**- the atmosphere or predominant emotion in a literary work. In other words, mood is the emotional response of the reader to the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diction (word choice)</th>
<th>Positive or Negative</th>
<th>What tone is created by the use of the word? Refer to the tone/mood chart if needed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Imagery

Now, let’s analyze the **imagery**. The imagery taps into our senses to create an emotional effect. Complete the DJE below to demonstrate the emotional effects of imagery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imagery Evidence</th>
<th>Type (audio, visual, taste, smell, feel)</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. Figurative Language

A dialectical journal entry can be used to write commentary. Use the DJE below to derive the hidden meaning behind the figurative language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>List the type of figurative language.</th>
<th>Commentary (hidden meaning) What was the author trying to convey?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IV. Synthesis

A synthesis is the combination of elements to create a whole product. We will take the elements of the analysis and “TPDASTT” the poem. This acronym helps the reader to analyze poetry utilizing the elements above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>What does the title suggest?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P</th>
<th>Paraphrase</th>
<th>What do the explicit annotations convey?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D</th>
<th>Devices</th>
<th>What type of literary devices does the poet use and why?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V. Critical Thinking Questions

Answer the question.
Provide text evidence.
Provide a pattern of proof.

1. Death’s attitude toward the poem’s protagonist is best described as—
   a. hostile    b. amiable    c. condescending    d. indifferent

2. Identifying Death as a “connoisseur of roses” is ironic because—
   a. the gardener is afraid of him
   b. he appreciates roses by destroying them
   c. he is also described as a Spanish waiter
   d. he has not come to the garden to pick roses

3. Which of the following is the least traditional allegorical depiction of death?
   a. Thin as a scythe he stood there.
   b. Seeing his mouth stood open./ Big it was, with white teeth
   c. And there Death stood in the garden./Dressed like a Spanish waiter
   d. Death grinned, and his eyes lit up/ with the pale glow...
VI. Short Answer Response

Prompt:
How does the poet use such devices as figurative language, diction, and imagery to create an ominous tone? (Please choose one device). Support your answer with evidence from the selection.

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Extra fun with short answers.

1. How would you describe the character of the unnamed protagonist of the poem?
2. How does the depiction of Death contribute to the poem’s meaning?
3. How do lines 26 through 30 contribute to the meaning of the poem as a whole?
4. Does the fact that the protagonist takes so long to recognize what is going on add or detract to the poem? Though it’s obviously an allegorical poem, does the way the character Death is depicted and the way he is recognized so late say something about death?
5. Identify an element of irony in the poem and explain how it contributes to the poem’s meaning.
6. Identify any literary or rhetorical device and explain how it contributes to the poem’s atmosphere or theme, making sure to identify both the device and the atmosphere/theme?