TPCASTT
(A process set of skills for analyzing poetry; Developed by AP Programs)

T = Title
P = Paraphrase
C = Connotation
A = Attitude
S = Shift
T = Title
T = Theme

PONDER possible meanings of title
Translate the poem into your own words
Examine selections of words and meanings
Listen/consider speaker’s attitude or tone
Spot any shift or change in speaker or tone
Reconsider the title, connect title with poem
Determine possible intent, purpose or theme

Richard Cory

Whenever Richard Cory came to town,
We people on the pavement looked at him.
He was a gentleman from sole to crown
Clean favored and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was human when he talked,
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
“Good morning,” and he glittered when he walked.

And he was ---rich-yes---richer than a king,
And admirably schooled in every grace,
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked and waited for the light,
And went without the bread,
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.

E. A. Robinson 1897
Using TPCASTT to Analyze “Richard Cory”

**Title**
The title may be a name. The name could be someone famous. Using *Word With the Word* to analyze the name

Rich = wealthy 
ard = always
Cor = body
y = a or an
Richard Cory = an always rich body

**Paraphrase**
A handsome, rich, local celebrity in a small town (where the majority of people were poor and went without the extras like meat in their diet) was admired, almost worshipped for his wealth, style, and education. Richard Cory seemed to have it all to the extreme and people wished they could live his life. However, Richard Cory took his own life leaving his admirers as stunned as his readers.

**Connotation**
- “People on the pavement” pavement as opposed to what?
- Sole to crown instead of using head to toe crown = wealth, royalty
  sole/soul maybe his “soul” works here too
- “Imperially slim” not starving or anorexic, “royally” fit and trim
- “Arrayed” rather than dressed, he was arrayed as if for display
- “Fluttered” pulses suggest he stops hearts and pulses
- “Glittered” suggests that Cory dazzled in his manner, confidence

**Attitude**
The attitude of the speaker is awe, complete admiration, tinged with green envy, “to make us wish that we were in his place”

**Shift**
There is a shift, a bombshell shift at the end. Readers do not expect this suicide. The irony of someone’s suicide, someone who appeared to have had it all, leaves readers surprised.

**Title**
The title, just a name has new meaning. This Richard Cory is a body (not necessarily always rich). This name is now on a tombstone.

**Theme**
Possible themes include the following:
All is **NOT** what it seems.
Money $$$$ does NOT ensure happiness.
"100 Years"  
a song by FIVE FOR FIGHTING

I'm 15 for a moment
Caught in between 10 and 20
And I'm just dreaming
Counting the ways to where you are
I'm 22 for a moment
She feels better than ever
And we're on fire
Making our way back from Mars
15 there's still time for you
Time to buy and time to lose
15, there's never a wish better than this
When you only got 100 years to live
I'm 33 for a moment
Still the man, but you see I'm a they
A kid on the way
A family on my mind
I'm 45 for a moment
The sea is high
And I'm heading into a crisis
Chasing the years of my life
15 there's still time for you
Time to buy, Time to lose yourself
Within a morning star
15 I'm all right with you
15, there's never a wish better than this
When you only got 100 years to live
Half time goes by
Suddenly you're wise
Another blink of an eye
67 is gone
The sun is getting high
We're moving on...
I'm 99 for a moment
Dying for just another moment
And I'm just dreaming
Counting the ways to where you are
15 there's still time for you
22 I feel her too
33 you're on your way
Every day's a new day...
15 there's still time for you
Time to buy and time to choose
Hey 15, there's never a wish better than this
When you only got 100 years to live

(see TPCASTT sample)
TPCASTT of “100 Years”

**Title**  
“100 Years” suggests a milestone of years. It’s not a set of time like a century unit, but a 100 individual years. Who knows? Perhaps, it has something to do with someone who has lived a hundred years.

**Paraphrase**  
Beginning at age 15, the speaker begins to examine ages as a set of stages in a life span, a long, but finite life span, “When you only got 100 years to live.” As each age passes, his life’s journey changes in relationships, eventually including marriage and at least one child. As he approaches his halfway point, he becomes wise increasingly valuing life, which seems to increase in speed, “…another blink of an eye / 67 is gone.” Even at age 99, he dreams of just another moment, and seems to flashback again to age 15, the point, perhaps, at which he became a man, driving, working, planning, and loving life’s opportunities.

**Connotation**  
All the clichés about time become real. At 15, he may be killing time, until his time flies when he’s on fire and in love, and then time becomes scheduled and split, and “moments” become special. It’s no wonder they use this song to showcase changes in life experiences and credit or money needs. The speaker is sailing through time, and “the sea is high,” is the metaphor used to show the fullness of that wave and stage of life. But he also uses a metaphor of life as a day’s journey to show time’s passage when he uses the line “…sun is getting high/ We’re moving on.”

**Attitude**  
The speaker begins his reflection of age at age 15, “…caught between 10 and 20,” as if he is trapped. In a real sense fifteen year olds are trapped or limited, because of so many age restrictions imposed on them, not fully independent, but ready with hearts and minds fully charged, prime time to love, laugh, learn, and live. The speaker’s attitude about life and his situation changes with age, and fifteen is no longer a trap with limitation. Fifteen becomes a precious “moment” of decision and choices, opportunities and growth which the speaker values.

**Shift**  
Changes in relationships bring changes in perspectives. At 22, perhaps, in college, he meets his girl, and at 33, he realizes, “I’m a they/, A kid on the way/ A family on my mind.” But the biggest change occurs at middle age when “Half time goes by/ Suddenly you’re wise.” The age 15 is repeated 8 times, and by the end, the biggest shift has been the realization that 15 is the best time for choices. There’s time to “lose yourself…Time to buy and time to choose.” Perhaps, there is nothing like aging to change a perspective about adolescence.

**Title**  
At the conclusion of the poem, the speaker realizes that life is moments, and we only (if we are lucky) have 100 years to live. So what we do with the “100 Years” is important.

**Theme**  
This song is another variation on a common poetic theme of Carpe Diem, “to seize the day,” living it as if it were the last for if we are very lucky we will get 100 years to live. And what we do with our life, what course we sail as our day’s journey begins, may take shape as early as age 15. So we should celebrate each age and stage, because we are only “15 for a moment.”