

Directions: Read and annotate the poem. Focus your annotations on diction (word choice) and other writing strategies.

The Dead Heart
~ Anne Sexton

It is not a turtle
hiding in its little green shell.
It is not a stone
to pick up and put under your black wing.
It is not a subway car that is obsolete.
It is not a lump of coal that you could light.
It is a dead heart.
It is inside of me.
It is a stranger
yet once it was agreeable,
opening and closing like a clam.

What it has cost me you can't imagine,
shrinks, priests, lovers, children, husbands,
friends and all the lot.
An expensive thing it was to keep going.
It gave back too.
Don't deny it!
I half wonder if April would bring it back to life?
A tulip? The first bud?
But those are just musings on my part,
the pity one has when one looks at a cadaver.

How did it die?
I called it EVIL.
I said to it, your poems stink like vomit.
I didn't stay to hear the last sentence.
It died on the word EVIL.
It did it with my tongue.
The tongue, the Chinese say,
is like a sharp knife:
it kills
without drawing blood.

