**A Wife in London**

I--The Tragedy

She sits in the tawny vapour
   That the City lanes have uprolled,
   Behind whose webby fold on fold
Like a waning taper
   The street-lamp glimmers cold.

A messenger's knock cracks smartly,
   Flashed news is in her hand
   Of meaning it dazes to understand
Though shaped so shortly:
   He--has fallen--in the far South Land . . .

II--The Irony

'Tis the morrow; the fog hangs thicker,
   The postman nears and goes:
   A letter is brought whose lines disclose
By the firelight flicker
   His hand, whom the worm now knows:

Fresh--firm--penned in highest feather -
   Page-full of his hoped return,
   And of home-planned jaunts by brake and burn
In the summer weather,
   And of new love that they would learn.

Who is Thomas Hardy?
Thomas Hardy was a 19th-century British novelist (1840-1928), who was born in Dorset, England. Due to influences of other writers, such as Dickens, Woodsworth, and Eliot, he was highly critical of the Victorian society and the decline of the rural society. Because his family lacked the means of university education, Hardy ended his education at the age of eighteen. Hardy became interested in architect as a church restorer but knew that architect was not his passion. He quickly decided to dedicate his life to writing. Some of Hardy’s poetry is pessimistic and gloomy, because they are reflection of his remorse about the death of his wife, Emma Gifford.

Hardy’s poems examine the social constraints on the lives of people in Victorian England, and criticize beliefs like education, marriage, and religion. His poems also have the theme of fate or chance, where characters encounter crossroads in their journey.

December 1899
Form/Structure
Four stanzas that consist of five lines each
Divided into two "parts"

How does this contribute to meaning of poem as a whole?
The structure of the poem creates a sense of time for readers. The first part and second part narrate different events. While the first two stanzas tells of the woman receiving information about her husband's death, the last two stanzas tell of the woman receiving a posthumous letter from her deceased husband.
Rhyme/Meter
Rhyme Scheme
Stanza 1: ABBAB
Stanza 2: CDDCD
Stanza 3: EFFEF
Stanza 4: GHHGH
Meter is inconsistent and varies throughout the poem

How does this contribute to meaning of poem as a whole?
Although the poem has a regular rhyme scheme, the changing meter and irregular pattern of rhyme doesn't create a "sing song," playful tune. This emphasizes the depressing mood and the emotion behind the poem's message.
Theme
After a loved one dies, feelings of disbelief, abandonment, and pessimism are inevitable.
Literary Techniques
Imagery
“the street lamp glimmers cold”
“ the fog hangs thicker”
“By the firelight flicker”
The use of imagery provides the reader a sense of mourning and darkness. The words “cold,” “fog,” and “firelight” illustrate winter, a time when the weather is dull and gloomy and many stay by their fire for comfort. The comfort of the “firelight flicker” adds pathos.
Euphemism
"He-has fallen–in the far South Land"
The use of euphemism allows the author to provide the readers with a less offensive way/indirect way of a death.
Simile
“Like a waning taper the street-lamp glimmers cold”
This compares the waning light of the street lamp to the life of a soldier that is fading away.
Irony
“His hand, whom the worm now knows”
“Page full of his hope return”
The irony is of the hope and excitement of the husband’s return home. But, in fact, the husband will never return
Sound Devices
Onomatopoeia
"knock"
Alliteration

“The Tragedy”
“shaped so shortly”
“He – has”
“firelight flicker”
“his hand”
“fresh-firm”
“by brake and burn”
Consonance
“That the Thames”
“That they”
Assonance
“waning taper”
“lines disclose”
“whom the worm now knows”
How do these contribute to the meaning of the poem as a whole?
The literary techniques and sound devices used in "A Wife in London" contribute most heavily to the establishment of the gloomy mood. The imagery, simile, euphemism, and irony help readers understand the tragedy and irony of the poem's story. The sound devices provide harsh sounds to the harsh reality of the news of the death of the woman's husband.

Symbols/Allusions
Symbols
"She"
-Symbolizes the many women who have lost relatives in war
“webby fold on fold” and “fog hangs thicker” = darkness and inability to see clearly
-Symbolizes the wives or the people of England who waiting to hear the news about the Boer War but are unable to see the war or hear how the war is proceeding
“cold”
-Symbolizes the mood of the people in England during the Boer War
“firelight flicker”
-Symbolizes the "flicker" of hope that always exist in love
Allusions
None except reference to the Thames River

How does this contribute to meaning of poem as a whole?
The symbols and allusions used in this poem broaden the meaning of this poem and make it applicable to the both readers of the past and present.
Tone
D
iction
"glimmers cold"; however, usually associated with joy or hope
"fallen" instead of died or passed away
"far South Land": creates distance and ambiguity
I
magery
Images of winter, fog, and misery
D
etails
All information brought by telegram/letter
Grotesque image of the hand, "whom the worm now knows"
L
anguage
Sophisticated vocabulary at times but simple for the most part
Verbs and adjectives contribute to gloominess
S
entence structure
Long sentences with numerous pauses
Creates choppy effect
The tone could best be described as somber.