“Spring in the Classroom,” by Mary Oliver, is a poem about the class’s escalating contempt towards their seemingly lifeless teacher. Literary elements such as tone and hyperbole contribute to the meaning of the poem, by enhancing the character portraits. The poem uses the students’ accounts to develop both the teacher and the students. Hyperbole and imagery are both used to help define the meaning of the story thought through the characters.

The poem uses the student’s commentary to help define both the teacher and the student. “By Miss Willow Bangs, her eyes two stones behind glass.” The students see Ms. Bangs as a stone cold and heartless person. This shows the thought process of the students as they begin to associate the teacher with all that is bad because she is doing her job. This adds to the notion that desires can cloud reality, because the students are so focused on the beautiful spring days that they hate anyone that stands between them and being outside. This meaning is only found because the character portraits provide insight into the thoughts and feelings of the students. “So spring surrounded the classroom, and we suffered to be kept indoors.” The students were focused on the beauty of spring and they were forced to stay inside. They students were so absorbed by the season that they have lost sight of what school is about. Their reality is being obscured by a cloud of desires, namely the desire to go outside.
The poem uses the literary elements imagery and hyperbole to help augment the meaning of the story by making the character descriptions a lot more rich. “While we sat like captives and breathed the chalky air.” The students were simply kept inside during a lesson. The imagery shows the distorted perceptions of the students. This imagery is able to show the meaning through the vivid pictures of the world through the lens of the students mind. This picture is able to further illustrate the meaning of the poem by adding depth to the characters. “To plot mutiny, even murder. Oh, we had her in chains.” The students are so irritated by the teacher that they begin to exaggerate ideas to kill their teacher. The students obviously dont plan on actually killing the teacher, but this hyperbole help to show the climax of the hatred the students are experiencing. This exaggeration lets the reader know more about the characters, so that they may better find the meaning of the story.

The poem uses the students accounts to develop both the teacher and the students. Hyperbole and imagery are both used to help define the meaning of the story thought the characters. That is why “Spring in the Classroom” by Mary Oliver is a poem that uses literary elements such as tone and hyperbole contribute to the meaning of the poem, by enhancing the character portraits.