

Whitman/Dickinson Paper

For this first paper, you will choose to explore the poetry of Walt Whitman or Emily Dickinson in great depth. To do this, you will write a poem in imitation of one of the poets. Think of the assignment as an exercise in critical reading and writing, rather than an exercise in creative writing. Through your imitation of the style, form, and content concerns of either Dickinson or Whitman, you will demonstrate your understanding of his/her work. Furthermore, you will explain your choices in your accompanying discussion.

Requirements:

- Your own poem in the style of Whitman or Dickinson. Do not simply paraphrase a Dickinson or Whitman poem. You should consider the poetic devices, diction, tone, form, and thematic concerns of the writer that you imitate. Then, you will write your own poem in the manner of that poet. Your poem should be set in the contemporary day (i.e. do not use archaic language or subject matter in order to imitate your poet).
- A three page analysis that explains your aesthetic choices and reflects on their relation to your poet's work. Specifically, how is your poem an imitation? How does it illuminate your poet's work? How does it demonstrate larger issues in your poet's writing? Your paper should include discussions of the following:
 - theme/subject matter
 - genre
 - versification (rhyme and meter)
 - literary devices
 - tone and diction

Grading Standards

You will be graded on the following components:

- strength of poem as an imitation
- clarity of thought and expression in analysis
- ability to contextualize material into the larger issues of the class

A note on Academic Integrity/Avoiding Plagiarism

<http://www.writing.ku.edu/students/docs/integrity.shtml>

Due Dates

Wednesday, September 16th: bring 3 copies of your rough draft for workshopping

Monday, September 21st: bring your final paper to class and submit a copy on Blackboard

Poem Explication

For this paper, you will be required to select a poem from one of the poets that we have discussed in class, other than Whitman or Dickinson. The poem should be included in our textbook. Be sure not to select a poem that we have discussed extensively in class. I do not want you simply to repeat our class discussion of a poem.

Make sure that you have something specific that you want to say about the poem that you are discussing. This specific argument that you want to make about the poem will be your thesis. You will support this thesis by drawing examples and evidence from the poem itself. In order to make a credible argument about the poem, you will want to analyze how the poem works, including some of the following elements: what genre the poem fits into, what its themes are, versification, cultural context, and what poetic techniques and figures of speech are used.

Theme: One place to start when writing about poetry is to look at any significant themes that emerge in the poetry. Does the poetry deal with themes related to love, death, war, or peace? What other themes show up in the poem? Are there particular historical events that are mentioned in the poem? What are the most important concepts that are addressed in the poem?

Genre: What kind of poem are you looking at? Is it an epic (a long poem on a heroic subject)? Is it a sonnet? Is it a narrative poem? A satire? An epitaph? A lyric? Does it fit into a specific literary movement that such as Modernism, Imagism, or Cubism?

Versification: Look closely at the poem's rhyme and meter. Is there an identifiable rhyme scheme? Is there a set number of syllables in each line? The most common meter for poetry in English is iambic pentameter, which has five feet of two syllables each (thus the name "pentameter") in each of which the strongly stressed syllable follows the unstressed syllable. A great reference on sound and meter:

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_soundmeter.html

Also relevant to this category of concerns are techniques such as caesura (a pause in the middle of a line) and enjambment (continuing a grammatical sentence or clause from one line to the next). Is there anything that you can tell about the poem from the choices that the author has made in this area?

Figures of speech: Are there literary devices being used that affect how you read the poem? Here are some examples of commonly discussed figures of speech:

- * metaphor: comparison between two unlike things
- * simile: comparison between two unlike things using "like" or "as"
- * metonymy: one thing stands for something else that is closely related to it (For example, using the phrase "the crown" to refer to the king would be an example of metonymy.)

* synecdoche: a part stands in for a whole (For example, in the phrase "all hands on deck," "hands" stands in for the people in the ship's crew.)

* personification: a non-human thing is endowed with human characteristics

* litotes: a double negative is used for poetic effect (example: not unlike, not displeased)

* irony: a difference between the surface meaning of the words and the implications that may be drawn from them

Cultural Context: How does the poem you are looking at relate to the historical context in which it was written?

Length: 4-5 page, double spaced, 12 pt font

Grading Standards

You will be graded on the following components:

-clarity of thought and expression

-specific details and analysis

-ability to contextualize material into the larger issues of the class

A note on Academic Integrity/Avoiding Plagiarism:

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Due Dates:

Wednesday, November 11th; bring three copies of your draft to class for peer workshopping

Monday, November 16th; bring a paper copy to class and submit a copy on Blackboard

Book Review

For your final paper, you will be asked to review a book of poems by a single author. You will choose a book of contemporary poetry written by one of the poets listed. If you would like to read a book by an author not on the list, please see me for approval. The books by the poets listed should be easy to locate in the library, in the various bookstores in town: Oread Bookstore (in the Union), Borders, and The Raven, or online Amazon.com, etc. After you finish reading the book, you will write a 1,000-word review.

Requirements:

(1) Select and read a full-length book by one of the authors on the list. The book should be a book of poetry (as opposed to fiction or essays). Additionally, the book should not be a “collected” or “selected” edition.

(2) After reading the book, you will write a 1,000-word review (about 3-4 pages). The review should provide a summary of the book’s contents and form. It should also seek to provide an exploration of the author’s poetics, as it exists in the book—i.e. why does s/he make the choices s/he makes? Models provided in class to serve as a guide for your writing.

(3) Some things to include in your paper:

- * A discussion of the book’s subject matter and form
- * The methods the author employs in exploring the form and subject—poetics.
- * An assessment of the strong points or shortcomings of the book.
- * How does this book change the way one should think about American poetry (about the issues discussed in the class so far).

Timeline:

Peer Review Workshop will occur on **Wednesday, December 2nd**.

The book review is due on **Wednesday, December 9th**.

Additional questions:

I will be happy to discuss the assignment with you and provide suggestions for possible book choices. Just stop by my office hours, or contact me for an appointment.

Literary Criticism Analysis Paper/Presentation

ENGL 210

Assignment:

1. Choose a poet/date from the course sign-up sheet.
2. Go to the KU library to research your poet. From the materials you find, choose an article, an excerpt from a larger piece of criticism, or a chapter from a book that relates the poet and the poems that we are discussing in class. Do not choose biographies or criticism on poems not covered in our anthology.
3. Write a 2-3 page summary of the criticism you read. Be sure to summarize the critic's main points, talk about his/her approach to the poet/poem, and talk about how this article related to your own ideas about the poet/poem. Evaluate his/her approach—what are the argument's strengths and weaknesses? *Be sure to only discuss **one** piece of criticism
4. On the day that we discuss your assigned poet in class, bring you written summary to class with you to turn in. Additionally, be prepared to give a short presentation to the class. This presentation can be as simple as reading your paper and coming up with a few questions from the criticism to start class discussion.

Grading Standards:

You will be graded on the following components:

- selection of relevant criticism
- clarity of thought and expression
- specific details and analysis
- ability to contextualize material into the larger issues of the class