



Your Poetry Paper

Requirements & Structure



Basic Requirements

- **The Goal:** to explore both the meanings of a poem and how the poet uses language to express those meanings.
- **In other words:** How does the poem work?
- A three to five page paper, typed, double spaced, 12 pt. standard font



“So how do I do that?”

By using our old friends:

- Content
- Context
- Questions
- Connections
- Construction



Content

What does the poem say?

- Approach this literally: what are the important words? What do they mean?
- Do some words have multiple meanings, or are they homophones?
- Does each stanza have a different thing to say? Or are they a continuing or developing idea?
- Does punctuation play a role in what the poem tells us?



Context

- What is the poet's story? Does their life affect the work?
- When was the poem written? Does its time affect it?
- Is the poem a particular genre (i.e. a love poem)? Does it follow rules or break them?



Questions

- Does the poet ask the reader literal questions?
- Does each stanza imply a question of its own? Does it make you ask a question?
- What life event does the poem speak to? How does its expression about the event differ from or represent traditional responses?
- How do poetic elements (rhythm, rhyme, meter, literary devices, etc.) affect our understanding?



Connections

- How does this work relate to a life event or common emotion?
- How does it relate to other works by the poet?
- How does it relate to other poems?
- How does it relate to other works in other genres?
- How does it speak to you as a reader and a writer?



Construction

- How is the work structured?
- How do poetic elements (see your vocabulary pages!) contribute to the work's meaning?
- Why did the poet structure it the way they did?
- What role does its structure have in how we react to it?



And Always Remember:

- ENGAGE with an introduction that grabs readers.
- INCLUDE a copy of the poem for the reader's reference.
- EXPLAIN and DEVELOP ideas thoroughly. Err on the side of over explaining, because you can always cut down later!
- Write a true CONCLUSION! Come to a resolution about a questions discussed in the text, show readers why your reading is valuable, connect with their lives so they know what you have to say is important!