

Poetry Response Journal | Humanities II

Poetry makes up a considerable amount of the study we will be undertaking this year as well as a crucial artifact of human civilization, empathy, and vision. As a child, you undoubtedly rollicked with nursery rhymes and tongue twisters. Perhaps you now enjoy singing along with the radio/CD or playing a musical instrument. Who among us has not experimented with tongue twisters or puns or knock-knock jokes? Unfortunately, somewhere along the way, too many people lose the enjoyment that comes from rolling a few lines of poetry off the tongue or moving with the rhythm poems create. I want to invite you to revisit that sense of fun and excitement. Dive into a few selections; swim among them and allow them to envelop you, cool you, splash over you, invigorate and feed you. Finally, let them guide you to a better understanding of poetry in general and to a sense of security as you approach the challenge of rigorous study of poetry. You will use the 3 poems you selected to complete this assignment. You are to read through them once or twice in any order and at various times. Read aloud when possible; read to others; read when you are in different moods; read with varying tones, inflections, and emotions. Discover how poems change when you change. Give these poems an opportunity to become a part of you and to speak to you.

This is the important part of the assignment; however, I will ask you to share with me in the following manner:

- Choose one poem every assigned date and write a response (check your syllabus).
- This response should be ~200 words in length, typed and double spaced. MLA format.
- Personal reactions do not count towards the word count.
- Responses must be PRINTED and submitted at the beginning of class on the assigned day (except for the one that is due when I am in London).
- Do not use outside sources. This is a way for you to become comfortable with approaching poetry independently.
- Attach your annotated poem to the back of your response. **Yes, this means you have to print it and write on it.**

What should you include in your poetry response?

- Name the poem and poet.
- Quote or paraphrase at least one line (include line number) from the selection.
- Your approach may come in several ways: analyze the poem as to theme or literary elements; discuss a single image or lines you consider particularly significant relating how and why. You might also relate how this poem evokes a memory for you, but this is **in addition to** an analysis element(s).
- Each poetry response should consist of at least 200 words of careful thought about the poem.

Graded according to the AP Poetry Rubric with consideration for grammar, usage, mechanics, and organization. **Due dates will be on your syllabus.**

While the bulk of the essay should include all of the above characteristics, feel free to sprinkle some of these (but no more than approx. 15% of the paper).

[1] your evaluation of the poem, good or bad, supported by specific references from the poem

[2] an analysis of the poet's persona, i.e. the poem's speaker

[3] a comparison to another poem, song, story, movie...

[4] a statement relating the poem to your experience or ideas

[5] an explanation of problems you had in understanding the poem and your thought processes in overcoming the obstacle

Be sure to write your reaction at the end of your analysis and label it as such!

e.g. PERSONAL REACTION – I found the line “I’ve no spade to follow men like them” (l. 28) to be particularly meaningful, given the fact that many people feel alienated from their parents and grandparents. When parents try to push children in a similar direction career-wise, we all feel that internal conflict between loyalty and independence.

REMINDERS:

Overview: highlight any confusing/interesting lines

Deconstruction: Read the poem a third time and look for any of the following literary devices or features:

- *Language:* tone, style, diction (word choice)
- *Conventions:* unusual punctuation, grammar, poetic forms
- *Devices:* imagery, metaphor, symbols, repetition, and more
- *Design:* structure, organization of content (e.g., stanzas, past-to-present)
- *Themes:* big ideas that run throughout the poem
- *Connections:* how might this relate to the other works we are reading, conversations we are having in class lately?
- *Purpose:* is the poet trying to explain? Define? Persuade? What, why, and how do they do this?

The poem itself *must* show evidence of close reading – e.g., underlined words, comments, questions, connections, suspected patterns.

Your written response should be one perfectly written essay of at least 200 words (not a loosely written journal-type response) with a clear assertion, supporting details, and examples or quotations from the poem. *Your response must include quotations from the poem.* These quotations must be *embedded*, not left to stand alone.

Some advice...

- ❖ Be sure to include the **name of the poem and poet** at the top of your paper.
- ❖ **Quote or paraphrase at least one line**; include the line number(s).
 - Remember that you cite a poem as such:
 - "Love/was a camera in a doorway, love was//a script, a tin bird. Love was faceless,/even when we'd memorized each other's/lines" (Muske-Dukes lines 14-18)
 - One slash = Line Break
 - Tow slashes = Stanza Break
- ❖ The "response" itself can take on many forms, including, but **not** limited to:
 - an analytical explanation of the poem's theme or other literary elements
 - application of the poem to a personal experience (in addition to analytical elements)
 - vivid discussion of a single image or a few particularly significant lines
- ❖ Remember to focus on **how** and **why**. FUNCTIONS! (How would the poem be different if a particular line, literary device, rhyme scheme, or word were different???)
- ❖ Do **not** write about how you could not understand the poem. Trust me. You can.

Some helpful reminders...

- Poems don't "talk about" anything. The speaker/poet/stanza/line/word may imply, suggest, connote, argue, assert, depict, declare, express, speculate, illustrate, contend, emphasize, etc. You get the picture.
- "Flow" is a pretty empty word, especially if "the rhyme scheme helps the poem flow" while the lack of rhyme in another poem "really makes it flow." Avoid vague, unsupported statements or overused/generalized labels like "interesting."
- Be careful with rhyme and meter; they're easy to spot but often hard to analyze. If you can't answer "so what?" then leave them out altogether.
- Put some thought into the organization of your response. Will you move stanza-by-stanza? If so, be careful not to fall into the summary-only trap. Watch for meaningful shifts and contrasts along the way. Will you instead discuss the literal and then the metaphorical? The form and then the content? No one choice is necessarily better than another, as long as you don't ramble!
- PROOFREAD! I will count off for grammar, spelling, and mechanics, so clean things up. Spell the poet's name correctly. Spell the title correctly.

→ Quote directly from the poem, using line references:

Amy Lowell's emphasis on the speaker's stiff apparel, down to the minute detail of "each button, hook, and lace," echoes the poem's underlying function as a reaction against the oppressiveness of life's many patterns (109).

The original line ends in a period, but the grammar of my sentence dictates a comma here. Notice how the comma goes *inside* the quotation marks. If my sentence needed a question mark or exclamation point that wasn't in the poem, *then* I could put it outside the quotation marks.

Hooray for *strong verbs!*

Note the line reference *at the end of the sentence*; no need to write "line," as it is implied. If it were unclear that the text was a poem, *l.* would suffice, *ll.* for multiple lines.

Know your literary terms: *speaker v. narrator.*