

Freshman Poetry Explication Essay

Directions: Choose a poem of literary merit and explicate it following the format detailed below. Your essay is to include an original title, be typed in MLA format and follow the format for quoting a poem. As the last page of your essay, include a typed copy of the poem you explicated with the line numbers every 5 lines. The essay is due at the beginning of the period _____ and must also be turned into turnitin.com.

How to Begin

- Choose a poem that you find in a book of poetry. If you are unsure about the "literary merit" of a poem, check with me.
- Look for the meaning of the poem—what the poem is about, what the poet apparently intended.
- Look for the overall structure of the poem. Try and determine the strategy the poet used to present the meaning, the theme. Often, you must first determine who the speaker or speakers of the poem are and what the tone is.
- Look for poetic devices for which terms exist (e.g., simile, alliteration), and try to determine how they function.
- Look for words that are used in unusual ways or that are seemingly out of place, and try to decide their function, if any.
- Look for lines/sections of the poem that require explanation; do your best to understand them.