

ENG 2003: Introduction to Poetry
Prof. Nina Barnett
Fall 2018

Essay #2: due Monday, December 10th

Connecting a Poem to Contemporary Life

Paper Length and General Requirements

Your paper should be between 3-5 pages of writing, double-spaced, Times New Roman font, using 1 inch margins and size 12 font. You should use MLA format, with a Works Cited page as the last page of your paper (so your paper will be at least five pages in total). Violations of academic integrity will result in a failing paper. Unlike paper #1, there will not be an opportunity to revise this paper, so spend time on paper #2 so you can feel confident in your work.

Write a well-developed essay of approximately 750–1,200 words in which **you connect a poem we've read in the second half of the course to a recent and specific political or social news event**. Use examples from the poem in each body paragraph to illustrate how this poem connects to a current political or social news event. In what ways does this poem illuminate or complicate an issue that's recently been in the news? In your essay, make a claim about how your poem's central themes or ideas are developed through choices in tone, speaker, situation, setting, and language. For this paper, you must include **three outside sources** (news articles) that discuss this contemporary political or social news event and you must quote from each article at least once in your paper. If you wish, you may also include some biography about the poet also, but be sure to include additional sources in your Works Cited page, and to quote them correctly in your paper. *Do not make your paper about the story of the poet's life*. Your paper must have a Works Cited page in MLA style that lists all sources you've used, including the poem. You also need MLA citations for all quotations and paraphrases.

Examples of Possible Topics:

Analyzing Walt Whitman's "I Hear America Singing" in the context of Amazon's rumored decision to open a new corporate headquarters in Long Island City.

Analyzing Pedro Pietri's "Puerto Rican Obituary" in the context of the ongoing recovery from 2017's Hurricane Maria.

Analyzing Langston Hughes' "I, Too" in the context of Colin Kaepernick's ad campaign for Nike.

Analyzing Langston Hughes' "I, Too" in the context of Stacey Abrams' campaign for governor of Georgia.

Analyzing Margaret Atwood's "True Stories" in the context of a specific example of fake news from 2018.

Analyzing Andrew Grace's "Not a Mile" in the context of the opioid addiction crisis in the United States.

Analyzing Pedro Pietri's "Puerto Rican Obituary" and its connection to DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals).

Analyzing Nancy Gomez's "Discovering Colors in Prison" and convicted felons regaining the right to vote in Florida.

(These are sample topics: feel free to devise your own but I will ask you to submit your topic for approval).

Organizing Your Paper

Your essay should have a **focused introduction** that indicates which poem (title and author) you're writing about and that identifies which person in the news or which contemporary issue that you are connecting to the poem. Your introduction should have a focused, narrow thesis that gives a roadmap for your reader. **Body paragraphs** should analyze the poem in some detail (speaker, figurative language, situation, etc) with quotes in each body paragraph. Each body paragraph should also connect your analysis to the person in the news or contemporary issue you are writing about. Your body paragraphs are where you should be using your three outside sources. Your **conclusion** should also refer back to your thesis, and tie your essay together.

Using Your Sources

Remember that most of the essay should be *your own ideas*, and that you are using the three outside sources to enrich your own analysis. Quote from your outside sources to elaborate on points you've made throughout your paper. Incorporate them into your own analysis, and explain why you've chosen to quote a particular sentence or passage. A good system is to do the following: state your point, quote the article and explain the quotation's connection to your point (one way to remember this strategy is to think of it as a *quote sandwich*). Following this system will insure that you use the criticism to make *specific connections* to your own thesis when you incorporate the news article. For this paper, use three news articles that are from different newspapers or news sites.

Please remember a few key tips for writing about poems:

Name the parts of the poem correctly. Poems often (but not always) come in lines. Words that come before the line breaks are often important words (for example, rhyming words are frequently located at the end of lines). A blank line between two lines of poetry indicates that a new stanza is beginning. A sentence may run across multiple lines. If a sentence ends in the middle of a line, the sentence is enjambéd. If it ends at the end of a line, it is end-stopped.

Include quotations from a poem correctly. Unless you are quoting a very long section (more than 3–4 lines), you should probably incorporate the poem into your paragraph's ordinary style. BUT, it's nonetheless important to indicate where the line breaks were. You do that by inserting a single backslash with one space on either side (/) to show the line break. A double backslash (//) shows a stanza break. Put line numbers in parenthesis at the end of the sentence where you've quoted them unless you introduce the line numbers before you quote:

Sylvia Plath's poem "You're" relies on unusual similes to describe a developing fetus: "Snug as a bud and at home/Like a sprat in a pickle jug" (lines 13-14).

or

Lines 13-14 of Sylvia Plath's "You're" showcase ones of Plath's many unusual similes: "Snug as a bud and at home/Like a sprat in a pickle jug."

Works Cited Page

For this paper you must have a Works Cited page using MLA format. Your Works Cited page should **list the poem you are writing about, along with your 3 outside sources**, all in alphabetical order by author's last name. If you would like me to review your Works Cited page before turning in your paper, hand it in to me during class: do not e-mail it to me.

Avoid Plagiarism

I am interested in your own thinking and writing. Make sure your paper includes a Works Cited page and cite all direct quotations and paraphrases correctly, using MLA format. Do not use any outside sources are not listed on your Works Cited page: this includes websites from the internet (which are not considered scholarly sources

anyway). Any violation of academic integrity will result in a failing grade in the paper, and possibly the course. I am required to report all such violations to the college's Academic Integrity Officer.

Timeline

Mon, Nov 19: hand in your proposed paper topic (poem plus which person/contemporary news story)

Mon, Nov 26: class meets at the library to work on finding sources

Wed, Nov 28: in-class workshop on Paper #2 and review of MLA format for Works Cited page

Mon, Dec 10: hand in paper at the beginning of class (if you hand in your paper late, there will be a late penalty of half a letter grade for every class it is late. The last day you can hand in this paper is December 18th, the last day of class.)