Prof. Gold

ENG 2003

Spring 2012

Final Essay: What is Poetry?

Paper Length: 4-6 Pages

Due: May 22, 2012

This assignment has been designed to help you gain experience in writing an essay that compares two poems; it builds on the series of close readings we have been doing all semester.

**Learning Goals:**

* Perform close readings of a poetic text that pay careful attention to language, syntax, rhythm, and form;
* Analyze formal and stylistics properties of multiple poems;
* Compare and contrast the treatment of similar motifs and themes in multiple works;
* Center each paragraph around a specific subject;
* Start each paragraph with a topic sentence;
* Use transition statements to move the reader from topic to topic;
* Quote from and respond to our assigned readings;
* Cite quotations parenthetically and in a Works Cited list according to MLA format;
* Write with clear, grammatically correct prose.

**Assignment:**

Both Jack Gilbert’s “The Forgotten Dialect of the Heart” and Galway Kinnell’s “The Bear” can be said to be poems about the nature of poetry, the nature of language, and the nature of human beings. In this sense, they are both works that attempt to answer the question “what is poetry?” by describing the capacity of human language to make sense of the human condition.

For this assignment, you should write an essay that compares and contrasts these works by Gilbert and Kinnell. What do these poems have to say about poetry and about language, and how do they say those things in similar and/or different ways?

Your analysis should consider the formal properties of poems (such as metaphor, simile, rhyme, etc.) as well as their thematic similarities. Think, too, about denotative and connotative language: how do the very words these poets use suggest or imply particular meanings?

Your essay should be structured as a unified essay. It should have an overall argument that is summarized in a thesis statement, and each paragraph should be centered around a single topic. Avoid overly schematic writing strategies (such as devoting alternating paragraphs to each poem) and instead use the principles of close reading to lead to in-depth explorations of each text that **uses textual evidence to justify interpretative points**.

This assignment does not require additional research. Should you choose to consult outside sources, you must cite those sources appropriately in the paper itself.

Requirements:

* Your essay must have an original title that captures the argument of your paper in an engaging, creative way.
* The essay must be typed in 12pt Times New Roman font with 1” borders on every page.
* Should you use additional sources, your essay must include a list of Works Cited in accordance with MLA style.