

## Peer-Review Portion of the Essay Assignment for Poetry 102 MQ

The peer review portion of the assignment is worth 3% of your total grade.

- (1) In class, on the designated day, exchange essays with an assigned classmate.
- (2) Respond in writing to your classmate's essay, and return it to her or him at the end of class; and
- (3) On \_\_\_\_\_ submit (a) an edited version of your own essay along with (b) the draft of your essay which has been peer reviewed, and (c) the response paper prepared by your peer-review partner.

Guidelines for completing the peer review portion of the assignment (#2, above) are provided below.

The objective of this assignment is to create an opportunity for students to practice their own critical reading skills while at the same time benefitting from the feedback of peers. The estimated time needed to complete the assignment is one hour.

Carefully read your classmate's essay. Prepare a response of approximately 300 words in which you comment on the essay's content and structure.

Begin by pointing out the essay's main strength or strengths--by saying something positive about the essay as a whole or about certain elements of it (for example, it might contain good supporting evidence throughout, or it might be well-written). Then paraphrase or restate, in one sentence, the essay's thesis, so that your reader gets an idea of whether s/he has effectively articulated the central focus of the paper. You should spend some of your time commenting on the effectiveness of the introductory paragraph and the clarity of the thesis statement itself. Tell the writer what questions you come away with. Is anything confusing?

Keep these ideas in mind as you consider the introductory, or thesis, paragraph: The essay should not start out too large or too general in scope: Rather than commenting initially on the meaning of life or literature in general, the writer should jump right in to the topic of the paper. The first sentence should mention the poet's name and the name of the poem. The arguments should be clearly presented, and the paragraph should culminate with the thesis statement itself--the guiding idea which the writer proceeds to develop and support with evidence in the body of the essay.

A good thesis statement:

- √ narrows the topic, is focused and coherent, and presents a clearly-worded central idea
- √ is neither too narrow nor too broad
- √ presents the writer's "take" or position on the topic
- √ makes a generalization that can be supported with reference to the fiction
- √ is not merely a statement of fact
- √ most importantly, the thesis is not a statement saying what the writer is going to do, or how s/he is going to proceed in the paper. "It is a formal summary of the essay's topic (best worded to have an argumentative edge and commit the essay to a specific rhetorical strategy)" (*From Idea to Essay: A Rhetoric, Reader, and Handbook*).

As you read the essay's succeeding paragraphs, consider the effectiveness of the writer's development of the arguments. Do the middle paragraphs have topic sentences? Do they present convincing supporting evidence? Are quotations used effectively? Are there clear transitions between paragraphs?

Perhaps you are motivated to comment on the effectiveness of the conclusion. A good conclusion:  
√ does not merely repeat the points made in the thesis and topic sentences (the supporting arguments); it should attempt to clarify their significance  
√ suggests wider implications of the thesis

Tactfully draw the writer's attention to elements in his or her paper that might be further strengthened, benefit from clarification, or be otherwise improved. Keep in mind that your response is intended to assist the writer of the essay in completing another, improved, final draft of the same paper. Ideally, your response paper should show evidence of an engaged reading of your classmate's essay and the course material.

**Any critique you offer should be one you would be comfortable receiving yourself.**

Finally, serve as a copy-editor, assisting the writer of the essay to eliminate minor errors in the next draft by noting glitches in form in the margins of the draft you were given. Use only pencil to write on the essay itself, to circle typographical errors, or other stylistic or grammatical errors that you may identify, using the "Marking Symbols" and "Essay Format" handouts as guides. If such errors are manifold, concentrate on identifying them on the first two pages only.