

Essay 2—Analysis of Poetic Form

Write an analysis of how a poem's language and form (diction, figures of speech, syntax, sound patterns, verse form, meter, and so on) creates a unique experience for its reader. (**NB:** Your essay *must* include a section on verse form and meter.) Do not focus on *what* the poem says, but rather on *how* it says what it says. Think of the poem as an artifact, a work of verbal art, not as an essay or a message. Your essay should be about 2-3 pages (500-800 words).

Select one of the two poem's reproduced below (John Crowe Ransom's "Piazza Piece," or James Merrill's "My father, who had flown in World War I") for your analysis. Reproduce the whole poem early in your essay and refer to it frequently throughout your analysis.

Begin your paper with a genuine question about how the poem works. Make that question the last sentence of your first paragraph. The rest of the essay should answer this question.

Present your analysis in a clear and well-organized manner. Each paragraph should deal with a specific element of the poem, explain how that element works, and present its main point in a clear topic sentence. If you list the topic sentences of each paragraph, you should create an outline of your essay that would make sense by itself, would proceed logically, and would contain all of your main points.

Draw your conclusions in your final paragraph. Briefly sum up the answers to the question posed at the start of your essay. Refer to the analysis of Robert Herrick's "Divination by a Daffodil" as a model for your own paper: <http://drmarkwomack.com/readings/daffodil-paper>

Support your analysis with detailed evidence from the text, primarily direct quotations from the poem. Read the poem closely, read it repeatedly, and select relevant details to support your assertions. Here is a good rule of thumb: *Make sure that what you say about the poem could only be said about that one poem.*

Everything you say in your analysis must relate directly to the actual words of the text. Do not get sidetracked; stick with the words. Here is another good rule of thumb: *Make sure that what you say about the poem could not also be said about a paraphrase of the poem.*

Since you are writing for an audience who has already read and understood the poem you will analyze, do not waste any time on summary or paraphrase.

Write your essay in classic prose style: clear and concise, specific and engaging. Don't waste my time and yours trying to sound impressive. Make every word count.

In evaluating your essay, I will focus on the intelligence and specificity of your ideas, the precision of your analyses, the clarity of your prose, and the originality and persuasiveness of your thesis.

Your only source for this essay will be the text of your chosen poem. When quoting the poem, use parenthetical references with line numbers. Use proper MLA style for formatting your document. (See <http://drmarkwomack.com/mla-style/>: “Document Format,” “Anatomy of a Citation,” and “How to Quote Verse.”)

Due: March 26

Bring THREE copies of your essay to class for Peer Critiques.

Revision Due: April 5

Bring your Revised Draft, your Initial Draft with my comments on it, and all the Peer Critiques you received to class in a folder with your name on the front cover.

Piazza¹ Piece

—I am a gentleman in a dustcoat trying
To make you hear. Your ears are soft and small
And listen to an old man not at all,
They want the young man's whispering and sighing.
But see the roses on your trellis dying
And hear the spectral singing of the moon;
For I must have my lovely lady soon,
I am a gentleman in a dustcoat trying.

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—I am a lady young in beauty waiting
Until my truelove comes, and then we kiss.
But what gray man among the vines is this
Whose words are dry and faint as in a dream?
Back from my trellis, Sir, before I scream!
I am a lady young in beauty waiting.

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— John Crowe Ransom
(1925)

¹ veranda or porch

