

Pick of ONE of the following speeches by Shakespeare for your Explication Journals:

“But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?” *Romeo & Juliet* (2.1.2-32)

“Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears!” *Julius Caesar* (3.2.73-107)

“To be, or not to be, that is the question” *Hamlet* (3.1.55-87)

An *explication* connects the poetic devices in a passage with the ideas and emotions it conveys to a reader. A good analyst can account for the contribution of every line, ideally of every significant word, especially for a short passage. These journals will help you explicate your chosen speech.

Explication Journal 1

MEANING & CONTEXT

Purpose: to help you parse the basic meaning of the speech.

1. **Paraphrase** the speech, translating it word-for-word into simple, clear modern English prose. Pay attention to the sentence, not the line, as the principal unit of organization. Look for the main subject and verb and straighten out the syntax where you need to. Your paraphrase should make sense to a student in junior high.
2. Write a one- or two-sentence **summary** of the speech.
3. **Context** Who is speaking to whom and why? How does this speech fit into the scene? What happens right before and right after it? What would the scene lose if you cut this speech out?
4. **Tone** What is the speaker’s attitude towards his topic? towards his audience? towards himself?

DUE: 22 February

Explication Journal 2

LANGUAGE

Purpose: to analyze how Shakespeare uses language in the speech.

1. **Vocabulary** Identify at least **five** key words in the speech, words that seem particularly important in the speech or that are unfamiliar to you. Look them up in good dictionary (preferably the *Oxford English Dictionary*) and write down their most relevant meaning or meanings. Find out what meanings the key words might have had in Shakespeare's time that they don't have now. What new insights into the speech arise from understanding its key words?
2. **Wordplay** List any puns, double entendres, or words with multiple or ambiguous meanings. How does wordplay deepen or complicate the meaning of the speech?
3. **Imagery** List the images in the speech. Do the images relate to each other in some way? Do they form a pattern or cluster together? How do the images develop or clarify the subject?
4. **Figurative Language** Identify and analyze any similes, metaphors, symbols, understatement, hyperboles, personifications, or paradoxes. (Analyze metaphors with an eye on the *tenor* [the thing described], the *vehicle* [the thing used to describe it], and the connotations of the comparison.) How do the figure of speech help articulate the ideas in the passage?

DUE: 27 February

Explication Journal 3

STRUCTURE

Purpose: to understand the poetic, linguistic, and rhetorical structures of the speech.

1. Make an informal outline of the speech's main points. Look for the **progression of ideas**. Are there antitheses? (There usually are in Shakespeare.) Repetitions? Shifts in direction? How does the progression of ideas reflect the speaker's attitude or state of mind?
2. **Syntax** How are the words arranged into sentences? Is word order normal or inverted? Do sentences seem simple or complex? How does the syntax reflect the subject matter of the speech?
3. **Meter** Is it regular or not? Are the lines enjambed or end-stopped? How might the meter help cue an actor to perform the speech?
4. **Sound** List any examples you find of alliteration, rhyme, assonance, or consonance. How do the sound patterns contribute to the speech's effect on a listener?

DUE: 4 March

Explication Journal 4

CRITICAL QUESTION, WORKING THESIS, & INFORMAL OUTLINE

1. Look at the Paraphrase you wrote for Explication Journal 1. How is Shakespeare's text superior to your paraphrase of it? What does his language do that your language fails to do? What got lost in the translation? Use the work you've done in your Explication Journals to craft a specific answer; don't say something vague like "Shakespeare's language is more poetic" or "Shakespeare sounds better."
2. List the 3 or 4 topics from your Explication Journals that you found most illuminating, the ones that revealed the most to you about how the speech actually works.
3. Based on your response to item 1 and your list of topics in item 2, compose a **critical question** you want to ask about this speech in your essay. What makes this an interesting and significant question? What competing answers to this question might various readers of the speech give?
4. Make an **informal outline** that explores your answer to this question. Your informal outline should include a **working thesis** and a bullet-points list of **evidence** you will use to support that thesis. Use details from the text and your own critical thinking to create an argument supporting your answer. (See Short Story Journal 4 for a sample informal outline.)

DUE: 18 March