



DALLAS BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

Poetry Explication

A poetry explication is a short analysis of possible meanings and relationships of the poem's words, images, and other literary devices. This is an effective way for readers to connect to the poem's plot and conflicts within its structure.

1) **First Paragraph:** Inform the reader of the plot, conflict, and dramatic situation. The dramatic situation identifies and describes the speaker and audience of the poem. No formal introduction is necessary. The first paragraph should also use the name of the poem and note the author's name.

2) **Body Paragraphs:**

- Proceed line by line.
- Discuss the conflict by focusing on form, rhetoric, syntax, and vocabulary.

Ex: *Form* - Is the poem a sonnet, sestina, etc.?

Rhetoric - How are the statements made? Consider line length, parallel structure, word repetition.

Syntax - What are the subjects, verbs, and objects of the lines? What do they reveal? Are they vague or specific?

Vocabulary - Discuss the poet's word choice and explore multiple and archaic meanings.

Metaphor/Symbol - What do the metaphors and symbols reveal about the dramatic situation?

- Discuss elements of rhyme, rhythm, and meter.

Ex: *Rhyme* - Determine the significance of words joined by sound. If there is no rhyme, what is the significance of the end words?

Rhythm/Meter - How does this influence the perception and language of the speaker? You will want to include meter style (stress/unstress patterns such as iambic pentameter).

3) **Conclusion:**

- No formal conclusion is necessary, but do not simply restate the main points.
- It is important to focus on sound effects or the visual patterns in the poem; or, one might simply stop writing when the end of the poem is reached.

Ex: *Sound* - alliteration, assonance

Visual - How does the poem look on the page?

When writing an explication, refer to the speaking voice as *the speaker* or *the poet*. Do not use the author's proper name. Also, use present tense, and limit the use of *to be* verbs.

When quoting two or more lines from the poem, a slash (/) is placed between each line of poetry, including a space before and after the slash.