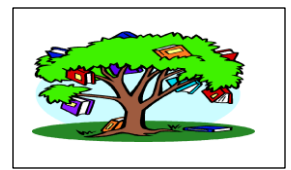


Toward Better Literacy: Reference Outlines



Writing about Poetry

General ideas

- In an essay, give the title, author and type of poem. Always use present tense.
- Quotes provide the object of explication, support for an argued thesis, or content for criticism.

Explicating poetry (how a poet gets his job done)

Cover the larger issues

- What is being dramatized and what conflicts or themes are dealt with?
- Who is the speaker and what is the voice, audience and relations with others?
- What is the design of action? What introduces, sustains or resolves the matter?
- When does action occur? How does context affect the matter or its meaning?
- Where is the speaker and does the setting complicate or simplify things?
- Why does the speaker feel compelled to say something? Is there a motive?

Deals with details

- Form: discuss the poetic form and any variations from that form.
- Vocabulary: words have connotations in context, apart from denotations.
- Rhetoric: how the speaker uses rhetoric may reveal a approach to the matter.
- Syntax: word order is used to provoke the imagination and create tone.

Discern the patterns

- Statements that follow the same format can delineate structure, having the same gravity.
- Consider the rhyme scheme and the significance of end words.
- Sound patterns like alliteration, assonance and consonance often cluster sign words.
- Rhythm and meter can create perceptions and feelings.

Analyzing poetry (asserting a thesis of the reader)

- Have one specific thing to advance- delimit.
- Quotations should be used only to support and advance thesis.
 - If no more than four lines, enclose in quotations and separate lines of poetry with a slash /
 - Don't "over-quote."
- Know the context of the poem
 - Biographical: what is going on with the author
 - Historical: what events and trends exist in poet's world
 - Cultural: what is the climate of the day ("Zeitgeist")
- Use research and cite authors who support the thesis
 - If research that does not agree with the argument in the paper:
 - If the logic and evidence are convincing, alter things.
 - If the logic and evidence are shaky, refute this and this will strengthen the thesis.