

English 220: Guidelines for Workshops & Peer Critiques on Poetry

I expect both your typed peer response (to turn into the author AND me) and the workshop discussion to generally follow the format below. Keep in mind, however, that new ideas may come to you in workshop and you may therefore offer comments that are not included in your written critique. I expect you to address each poem in terms of the questions listed below.

Answer the following questions with a typed response that should be approximately half a page to one full page (double-spaced) in 11-point Calibri or Times New Roman font. Also, you are expected to submit copies for the author of the poem and your instructor. Critiques for each set of poems are due the day of workshop, not after the fact, so come prepared to provide feedback to your peers during the workshop sessions.

1. Does the student follow the directions and requirements of the assignment? See the assignment sheet for the guidelines and specific directions, and identify what they did well. However, if they didn't meet the criteria, for instance, in writing a form poem, what was lacking? Also, what is the purpose of the poem?
2. Does the student leave the reader with any unanswered questions? Does the reader understand the meaning of the poem and can identify a central idea or theme? If so, summarize the meaning of the poem, or are the student's references too vague and contrived that it is too abstract to identify the meaning.
3. Does the student use specific, concrete details and imagery to "show" rather than simply "tell" the reader? Is the language vivid, not flowery, archaic, or cliché? Does it sound original, use colorful images, and elicit an emotional response? Is the tone appropriate? Etc.
4. Does the student use forced rhyme or does the rhyme enhance the poem? If the student uses figurative language, such as personification, simile, metaphor, or hyperbole, does it enhance the meaning of the poem or is it used inappropriately? Does the student use an appropriate structure with stanzas and/or an appropriate meter for each line to create harmony and consistent beat/rhythm or simply smoother transitions and continuity between lines or does it create more confusion because the lines are too lengthy or wordy and maybe the line breaks make it difficult to understand.
5. Does the student have major mechanical and/or minor mechanical errors? Do they need punctuation? Do they use a consistent and appropriate point of view for instance? Etc.

Final notes:

Remember that these workshop critiques are part of your participation grade, so I will not tolerate rudeness, unfounded criticism or malicious comments either in class/online or in your written critiques. Your job is to identify strengths and weaknesses in your classmates' work so that they may improve their poems in revision. Comments that are less than insightful and courteous will greatly jeopardize your grade for the semester.