

RESPONDING TO POETRY

Method for Writing about Poetry

I. Introduction

- Briefly introduce the title and the poet.
- Explain what the title suggests.
- Classify the poem (rhymed vs. unrhymed, lyric vs. narrative, fixed (epic, ballad, sonnet, etc.) vs. free verse).
- Describe the persona (speaker) and the subject of the poem.

II. Theme

- What universal idea does the poet seem to be addressing in the work? Try to group different ideas if there are multiple themes. If there is a story involved, briefly explain the story.

III. Imagery and Tone

- Describe how the poet uses imagery to evoke certain reactions/memories in the reader.
- Describe specific words the poet chooses and why these words are significant.
- Describe the speaker's tone and whether this tone shifts throughout the poem.

IV. Form and Structure

- Describe how the poem is organized (lines, stanzas, shape).
- Describe how the poet has sequenced ideas (length of lines, pattern of ideas, rhyme patterns).
- Describe the use of rhyme and rhythm in the poem and the effect this has on the overall meaning of the poem.

V. Language Patterns

- Describe how the poet uses poetic devices (similes, metaphors, hyperbole, personification, alliteration, onomatopoeia, allusions) to enhance the meaning.
- Describe any ambiguous phrases used in the poem.

VI. Poet's Message

- Describe what the poet is trying to communicate to the reader and your personal response to the poem.