

Take-Home Midterm Instructions

This is an essay assignment so all the rules of essay writing and documentation apply!

Exam Due: Tuesday, November 13th

Words: 800-1000+

Remember a literary essay is not written in the "I" voice. That goes for this assignment as well. Please see pps. 25-30 in Composition and MLA Documentation Booklet folder in the class files for help in developing the appropriate voice and tone in your paper.

- **Prompt:** Your task is to complete a full explication of one the poems given below. Please use the material from Week 10 "Explicating Poems: A Step-By-Step Process" found in the file "All Handouts for Poetry Midterm" or linked in the Week 10 module. Be sure to go through all the steps of the explication process.
- In doing your explication, which you must present in essay format, you will be able to use outside resources (although they aren't necessary). You must cite sources according to MLA style—including correct in-text citations and a Works Cited page. You should cite any class handouts you use. See Composition and MLA Documentation Booklet folder in the class files for an example of how to cite in-class handouts and see link below for information about how to cite lines of poems.
<http://www.georgetowncollege.edu/eng/resources/how-to-quote-poetry-in-english-papers/>
- You may look up information on the author and the context in which the poem is written. In fact, I encourage you to look up key historical information that the poet relies on the reader to use as a context for understanding the poem

I have put each of the poems on a page of its own so that you can see how the poem is presented on the page, in its entirety. This will also make it easier for you to mark up the poem. Keep scrolling.

*Finally, I have made a brief audio recording in which I read all of these poems aloud to help you understand them. Please listen to video before writing your explication. Here's the link:

<https://youtu.be/S2DQzgucIYA>

POEMS TO EXPLICATE FOR MIDTERM

You must use one of the four poems below for your explication. Explications of any other poem will not receive credit.

Option #1: Poem to Explicate

Sadness Is Not A River

By Lonny Kaneko

Sadness is not a river that flows through the daily plain;
It is a flood that has overflowed its banks and reaches
Around every rock and deep into the roots of ferns
And Douglas fir, into the crevices left by army ants and bees,
Where it sits soaking into the horizon waiting for a flame
To ignite the quiet depression that is drowning its victim
In the oil and kerosene of private immolation. Where is Joy,
The beautiful long-legged demon of youth that draws
The eyes of men and women alike? Where is June,
The queenly creature that soars through clouds, her fiery eyes
Ablaze with the spirit of sunrise? Gone, for Time has
Overflowed its aging banks overwhelmed by the rush
That accumulates from months of snows. When day reopens
Its morning window, my mother rises like the winter sun,
Struggling through the foggy thoughts and ailing vision
That blur light and darkness into ordinary gray.
Although summer light has faded, the pain
Of rising and falling must sustain each day.

Option #2: Poem to Explicate

The Face of Water

By Lonny Kaneko

The splash of water on your face
recalls the rush of water over
rock, slowly shaping each ridge
and curve. The roar of rain across
the porch clatters like loose rocks
collapsing from old cliffs too weak
to hold themselves together. Old
tales tell that water in the hands
of torturers reshapes the faces
of men too brave to cry. As I
hold a bucket of rain too green
and old to drink, the moon clears
the clouds, and I delight how its pale,
unworn face shimmers in my hands.

Poems taken from *Coming Home From Camp and Other Poems*

Option #3: Poem to Explicate

No Dogs or Mexicans Allowed

Anna Castillo (1996)

We were on our way to Laredo from Chicago
when the bus stopped at a diner in Texas somewhere.
Mami and I got off quietly,
the way we did things then, unobtrusive,
the way we always have
done things or left them
undone. Inside, as the rest ate, we waited
and waited
while no one took our order.
The driver called out:
"Everyone on board!"
and it was time to go.

Mami took my hand and hurried me along
so as not to be left behind. We
did not eat that afternoon.

That was a long time ago.
But my memory is probably better than a dog's.

Option #4: Poem to Explicate

For James Baldwin with Love (November 8, 1989)

Anna Castillo (1996)

"I've loved a few men and a few women. . .
In strange packages. . .the trick is to say yes to life."

--James Baldwin*

You chose, as I choose
to despair, or not
on a given night or day.
That despair turned inside out
you called love.

What is it like now, in a place
where there are no illusions
of democracy?

*From the film *James Baldwin in Another Place*.

Poems taken from *I Ask the Impossible* by Anna Castillo (2001)