

Explication Paper

Select a poem from the list below and write a one-to-two-page (300-500 words) explication of it.

William Shakespeare, Sonnet 94, 265
Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America," 720-721
Thomas Hardy, "The Ruined Maid," 1156
Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur," 1166
Paul Laurence Dunbar, "We Wear the Mask," 1223
Edna St. Vincent Millay, "Euclid Alone Has Looked on Beauty Bare," 1383
Sterling A. Brown, "Slim in Atlanta," 1426-27
Randall Jarrell, "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner," 1553
Dylan Thomas, "The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower," 1566-67
Judith Wright, "Eve to Her Daughters," 1579-80
Allen Ginsberg, "A Supermarket in California," 1713-14
Elizabeth Jennings, "My Grandmother," 1735
Adrienne Rich, "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers," 1791
N. Scott Momaday, "Headwaters," 1861
Billy Collins, "Litany," 1918

In a paper this brief, you will not have room to explain everything in the poem. So, explain what you think most needs explaining. Consider and unfold those details that most contribute to the composition of this poem as a whole or to your understanding of this poem as a whole. Such details might include the speaker of the poem, the possible meanings of symbols, the denotations and connotations of key words, allusions, the speaker's tone, the use of rhythm or sound or fixed form, and so forth. This assignment asks you to do a great deal in a short space. So, be concise and direct in your writing style, and take out (during the revising process) whatever is not essential.

You do not need to do any research for this assignment. But you do need to read the poem carefully. The most important and persuasive evidence in an explication paper is direct reference to and quotation from the poem itself to prove or illustrate what you are to explain about the poem.

Before you get started, I recommend that you take a look at Michael Meyer's discussion of how to write an explication and a sample student explication from *Poetry*, 4th ed. (attached). Reading these pages now may save you hours and hours in the future.

Sometime before September 12, please send me a brief e-mail message that lets me know which poem you've selected for this assignment.

Due Date: Monday, September 19

Length: 1-2 pages (300-500 words)