

English M01B, Dr. Booth

Essay #2: Exploring Poetry Essay Assignment Guidelines

In this second unit of the course, you began to position yourself in conversations, building on your awareness of “Cinderella stories and “hero journeys” while finding your voice through engagement with fiction, non-fiction, and a number of literary critical essays. This second essay is an opportunity to practice making your position firm, as you explore the genre of poetry and Upile Chisala’s collection about personal and emotional journeys through life. It is also an opportunity for you to continue honing your evolving composition skills as you practice literary analysis writing.

Assignment: write a 4-5 page/1500-word essay that addresses **ONE** of the following prompts using 4 poems from *a fire like you*—one from each part—and 2 literary critical essays.

1. Structure and Theme:

- *Option A.* Analyze how an aspect—or aspects—of the physical structure of the poetry (lines, stanzas, semantic fields, etc.) develop a core theme in *afly*.
- *Option B.* Analyze how an aspect—or aspects—of the rhythmic or linguistic structure of the poetry (alliteration, rhyme, meter, etc.) develop a core theme in *afly*.
 - Remember that structures comprise all aspects of a work, from the overall construction of the text (collection of poetry in 4 parts, each part comprising several poems, each poem written in a unique way).

2. Figurative Language and Theme:

- Analyze how an aspect—or series of aspects—of figurative language in the poem (metaphor, imagery, hyperbole, allusion, etc.) develop a core theme in *afly*.
 - Remember that figurative language is not only within the individual poems, but also informs the section titles as well as the title of the collection as a whole. Think about how these headings help to inform the contents of each part, particularly through the lens of non-literal language.
 - Remember to look at the entire text. This means thinking critically about the images used throughout the collection. Do be mindful though to acknowledge that these parts of the poetry have a different artist (check out “A Note on the Illustrations”, page 147 of *afly*).

- NOTE: though you select a single prompt to write about, you should incorporate relevant discussion of all aspects of poetry in your analysis. Discussions of structures can incorporate discussions of figurative language, and vice versa.

Your essay must include:

- **1 thesis** that positions your argument about the poetic element and its related theme
- **Analysis of a minimum of 1 poem from each part of Chisala’s collection**
- **Evidence from 2 Literary Critical Essay from Unit 2:**
 - *The Hero With An African Face*
 - “What Happens When Verse Goes Viral?”
 - “How Upile Chisala became a voice for young, black women around the world”
 - “Book Review: A Fire Like You”
 - “Women and Black Lives Matter: An interview with Marcia Chatelain”
 - “Critical Race Theory”
- **2 related quotations per body paragraph to develop and validate your argument**
 - You can use quotations from the poetry and the literary critical essays in any combination that works best for the argument you are developing and the points you are making.

- Remember to write about the poetry linearly; show the evolution of the thematic idea you are exploring by working through each part chronologically.

Deadlines:

- *Essay #1 Reflection:* Wednesday, 3/10, by 11:59pm
- *Essay #2 Complete Draft:* Wednesday, 3/10, by 11:59pm
- *Essay #2 Guided Peer Review:* Friday, 3/12, by 11:59pm
- *Essay #2 Best Draft:* Sunday, 3/14, by 11:59pm

Don't forget that the essays for this course are graded using our 1B Course Grade Contract and will earn a Grade Distinction that is determined using the Moorpark College English Department Standard Grading Criteria for Literary Analysis Essays. These essays will all earn a number in the gradebook: 1 (Not Yet), 2 (Pass), or 3 (High Pass). You can revise these essays as many times as you need to in order to reach your grade goal!

Formatting Requirements:

Your Grade Distinction will be determined using the Moorpark College English Department Standard Grading Criteria for Literary Analysis Essays, which includes the following:

- *Length:* 4-5 pages/1500-words (1250-1750)
- *Format:* MLA 8th edition for in-text and Works Cited page citations.
 - For in-text citations of these stories, use the author-page format using the story's specific author in this document, and this document's page number.
 - For your Works Cited page citation, cite this document at a Class Handout.
- *Style:* NO 1st-person or general/vague 2nd-person pronouns point-of-view; no contractions, colloquialisms. Remember to use the language of literary analysis and name the elements of literature you engage with.

Tips and Tools:

- ✦ “Students are asked to write literary analysis essays because this type of assignment encourages you to think about **how and why** a poem, short story, novel, or play was written. To successfully analyze literature, you'll need to remember that authors make specific choices for particular reasons. Your essay should point out the author's choices and attempt to explain their significance. Another way to look at a literary analysis is to consider a piece of literature from your own perspective. Rather than thinking about the author's intentions, you can develop an argument based on any single [element of literature]. You'll just need to use the original text to defend and explain your argument to the reader” (Roane State Community College OWL).
- ✦ “A **poetry explication** [...] describes the possible meanings and relationships of the words, images, and other small units that make up a poem. Writing an explication is an effective way for a reader to connect a poem's plot and conflicts with its structural features. This handout reviews some of the important techniques of approaching and writing a poetry explication, and includes parts of two sample explications” (writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/poetry-explications/). Don't forget that our larger class theme is “**Cinderella Stories and Social Justice**” and that you have a great deal of material to pull from for this essay, and not just from this unit!

- ✦ Although your essay will focus on specific literary elements, you will need to discuss other literary elements, too. Don't forget to use your literary language and show off what you know!
- ✦ There is no need to summarize the poetry or the collection. Literary analysis essays assume that essay readers are familiar with the text under discussion. All you will need to do is offer a bit of context (who, what, when, where, why, how) to prepare the reader for each piece of evidence you use.
- ✦ Use your Discussion Journal responses and interactions to organize and develop your response, and use the essay grading information and writing tips and templates from the Writing Tips and Tools module and booklet to organize and write your essay, focusing on the parts that specifically detail working with poetry.