

Sánchez Assignment Sheets for Critical Reading and Writing: Poetry and Drama

Please click on the links below to read my Assignment Sheets for the following projects:

Low Stakes Activities: In order to explore their thoughts and to gain practice with writing and responding to writers, students are asked to compose numerous low-stakes assignments throughout the course of the semester. These included freewriting, annotating, and journaling. Additionally, before diving into each individual essay assignment, students produced exploratory writing to examine what themes and topics interested them. Numerous process and peer review assignments were also assigned for students to think through their writing struggles and successes.

Establishing Mood: In this argumentative essay, students explored the rhetorical and material choices that they would make as directors of one of the plays that we had read in class. Developing a vocabulary of dramatic terms and stage directions, students had to state how actors should act and how a scene should look in order to convey an appropriate mood based on the context of the work as a whole.

Poetry Explication: For their second essay, students developed their terminology of poetic devices in order to analyze a poem. Students began by making a claim about the poem as a whole and then presented how their interpretation of the poem's structure and language supported that claim.

Literary Research Project: The final assignment of the course asked students to elaborate on a research question from reading texts in class and to conduct secondary research on that question. Students learned how to utilize the library's resources, including its databases and how to enter in to an academic conversation to answer their questions and raise new ones.

ASSIGNMENTS & REQUIREMENTS

Here is the general outline for writing your essays

- **Read** and **Annotate** the Text
- In your **Journals**, write what you notice
- **Discuss** in class to explore ideas
- Use **Exploratory Writing** and **Process Writing** to pool your thoughts together into one document
 - Share your Exploratory Writing to generate more ideas for a paper topic
- Use **Process Writing** to figure out what you want to do/are doing with all this new information
- Write a draft (+ conference w/ me to work through any questions or figure out a new direction)
- Revise draft + use **Process Writing** to write about what you are writing about
 - Share revised draft with groupmates
- Give/receive **Feedback** in our **Peer Workshops** on 2nd draft.
- Revise draft + **Process Writing** to write about what you are writing about now
- Revise draft further
- Edit Draft for grammar, punctuation, mechanics, opening and closing paragraphs, transitions, etc.
- Turn in **Final Draft** and **Cover Letter** to write about your essay's progression.

Low stakes activities

How do you become really good at something? Through practice. Naturally, you can't expect to be a great writer if you haven't practiced. As you can see above, the point of these assignments is to help you with writing your essays. I can give extensions *beforehand* on a case-by-case basis, but I will not accept late work. These assignments are not busy work that can be turned in at any time. They are to build off each other in order to help you conceptualize topics for your essays. We may have more or fewer of these assignments as the semester progresses. This area of your grade also includes any quizzes and exams I may assign.

A. Freewriting

Every day, we will begin class with freewriting. There is only one rule in freewriting—don't stop writing (unless your hand cramps up). Don't pause to think what the next logical point should be or to remember what you wanted to write about. Move from one thought to the next: don't revise, don't edit. If you don't know what to write about, just keep writing "I don't know what to write about" or "blah blah blah" until the next idea comes to you. The goal is not to create an understandable product, but to get everything all out on the page. Sometimes I will ask you to freewrite about something in particular. Other times, it may just be whatever random stuff comes to you. This is a good way to start the class off because 1) it gets the mind going and 2) allows you to release your distractions, so you can focus on class.

B. Annotating

In order to facilitate quick recall, you **MUST** annotate your text. Yes, this slows you down while you are reading BUT it will vastly shorten the time you spend leafing through your book for Journal entries, essays and class discussion. Annotating involves more than circling, underlining, or highlighting. You must also note *what* it is about a passage that you find intriguing or confusing. I will periodically check to make sure you are annotating properly. Please see "How to Read in College" for tips on what to annotate as you read.

C. Journals—post *and* hand in

#1. Look through your annotations. In Bold, quote a series of 3 related passages that you found interesting or confusing throughout the text. Give the page numbers for each quote.

Underneath, in standard type, write a paragraph in which you explore why you marked the passages. What are you thinking as you read these passages? Why might they be important? Explore their possible significance and, if possible, connect them to other passages in the text (at least 200 words).

#2. Look through your annotations. In Bold, quote a series of 3 related passages that you found interesting or confusing throughout the text. Give the page numbers for each quote.

Underneath, in standard type, write a paragraph in which you explore why you marked the passages. What are you thinking as you read these passages? Why might they be important? Explore their possible significance and, if possible, connect them to other passages in the text (at least 200 words).

#3. Look through your annotations. In Bold, quote a passage with a word that was new to you, or which was used in an odd way. Underline the word, give the page number.

Underneath, write down why you chose this word. What do you think it means? Why? Using the Oxford English Dictionary @ <http://ezproxy.stthomas.edu/login?url=http://www.oed.com/> track the word throughout time. How has the word's meaning and usage changed throughout the years? Some of the examples shown are a little hard to figure out. Spend some time trying to decipher what the sentence is saying. Is that pretty much how you would use the word today? How does the meaning of the sentence change if you were to apply the different definitions to the text? How would this change in meaning alter the play/poem? (at least 300 words)

Due: Write in your Journals whenever we read our texts. Journals must be posted on Blackboard by 5:00pm on the date due (usually the Sun, Tues, or Thurs before we meet for discussion) in order to be considered on time. **Please print your journals and turn them in every class period.** It is your responsibility to leave them with me if I neglect to officially collect them. Please note that to get full credit you must post your journals by the deadline *and* turn them in during class.

Score—graded as a whole per Unit; not per day.

6 points: Every entry a) meets the word requirement and b) is thoughtfully produced.

5 points: Every entry meets the word requirement but only some are thoughtfully produced.

4 points: Some entries are there; they meet the word req and are thoughtful.

3 points: All entries are there, but none meet the word req. Some are thoughtful.

2 points: Some entries are there. Some meet the word req. Some are thoughtful.

1 point: All entries are there, but they do not meet the word req. None are thoughtful.

0 points: Entries are not posted by due date and time and/or are not turned in on time in class.

D. Exploratory Writing—post *and* hand in

Look at the data in your journals. Read the “Exploratory Writing” handout by Erika Scheurer. Choose one of the exploratory writing methods listed there. This should help you find common themes or patterns in terms of what you have noticed while reading the text. In turn, you will have a much easier time drafting your essay, rather than going at it cold. Remember: the more effort you put into exploratory writing, the easier it will be to draft your essay!

On the top of the page, write down what time you started and ended the exploratory writing activity. I expect this to take at least 45 minutes of work on your part. Post your writing on Blackboard if you worked electronically. Either way, make copies by printing or photocopying in the library for everyone in your group, yourself, and me and bring them to class. Turn this in by the end of class (even if you posted it). It is your responsibility to leave your exploratory writing with me if I neglect to officially collect them.

Essay 1: Establishing Mood

Pick a scene from either *A Doll's House* or *A Raisin in the Sun* that resonated with you or had a strong impact on you. Now, pretend you have complete control over the direction and design of the scene. What kind of mood do you want to establish in this scene? Lighthearted? Mysterious? Somber? As you have control over the stagecraft, make very careful decisions about things like costumes, sets, lighting, and props in order to communicate your vision.

In the scene you have chosen, ask yourself the following questions (taken from the University of North Carolina's handout on drama):

- *Costumes*: What is everyone wearing? Is it appropriate to the historical period? Modern? Trendy? Old-fashioned? Does it fit the character? What does his/her costume make you think about each character? How does this affect the show?
- *Set design*: What does the set look like? Does it try to create a sense of "realism"? Does it set the play in a particular historical period? What impressions does the set create? Does the set change, and if so, when and why? How does this affect the show?
- *Lighting design*: Are characters ever in the dark? Are there spotlights? Does light come through windows? From above? From below? Is any tinted or colored light projected? How does this affect the show?
- *"Idea" or "concept"*: Do the set and lighting designs seem to work together to produce a certain interpretation? Do costumes and other elements seem coordinated? How does this affect the show?

You've probably noticed that each of these ends with the question, "How does this affect the show?" That's because you should be connecting every detail that you analyze back to this question. If a particularly weird costume (like King Henry in scuba gear) suggests something about the character (King Henry has gone off the deep end, literally and figuratively), then you can ask yourself, "Does this add or detract from the show?" (King Henry having an interest in aquatic mammals may not have been what Shakespeare had in mind.)

To the above, I would add:

Props: What objects do you want to include in a scene? Unless the stage directions state that the characters interact with a certain prop, most should remain in the background. Still, inclusion of a particular object can add an extra layer of meaning. What connotations does a certain object have that would consciously or subconsciously help the audience understand the mood you are trying to set?

Music: Are there certain points that call for a particular sound? Why? What instruments or songs would help convey the mood you have chosen to your audience? Is the music soft like a whisper or actually playing loudly over the actions of the characters? Why might silence be more appropriate?

You can discuss as many of these aspects as you would like, but I'm really looking for depth, not breadth (meaning that I would prefer that you go into detail on a couple of these aspects as opposed to scratching the surface on each).

Important note: You are expected to back up your claims. If you think that a scene is sad, you need to include evidence (particular lines the characters say) on why you think the scene is sad. If the costumes are ragged, what lines in the text lead you to this interpretation?

Grading Rubric

Section 1. Thesis Statement

- 3 pts There is a clear explanation not only of what kind of mood the writer is establishing, but also of why that particular mood is appropriate for the scene.
- 2 pts The writer's explanations are not entirely clear or the mood goes against the lines the characters have, but there is no clear reasoning behind this contradiction.
- 1 pt The writer neglects to provide any clear explanation of her/his intended mood or why s/he has chosen that particular mood.

Section 2. Argument

- 4 pts The writer is consistent in making one clear point about mood throughout the essay.
- 3 pts The writer has a clear mood, but veers off track into other, less relevant points.
- 2 pts The writer has many foci, making it difficult to see a consistent argument.
- 1 pt The essay is mostly summary.

Section 3. Discussion

- 3 pts The writer takes the time to explain and explore a claim s/he makes in depth.
- 2 pts Some claims the writer makes are explored in depth.
- 1 pt The writer moves quickly from one claim to the next without sufficient explanation or exploration.

Section 4. Evidence

- 3 pts Student supports statements with sufficient quotes.
- 2 pts Student supports statements with insufficient quotes.
- 1 pt Student does not support statement with quotes.

Quotes:

- 4 pts Are introduced as part of the flow of ideas and their significance is explained.
- 3 pts Are introduced as the natural flow of ideas but are not explained.
- 2 pts Are explained but are thrown into the paragraph without any context or introduction.
- 1 pt Are thrown into the paragraph without context and are not explained.
- 0 pts Student does not support statement with quotes.

Explanation of Quotes:

- 2 pts Is well thought out and conveyed clearly.
- 1 pt Relates somewhat to the topic but seems disconnected from the main argument.
- 0 pts Quotes are not explained.

Section 5. Language and Tone

- 3 pts Writer's tone is academic in nature, words are used properly.
- 2pts Writer's tone becomes informal at times or some words are used inappropriately.
- 1pt Writer's tone is informal throughout and/or there are consistently misused words.

Section 6. Organization

- 5 pts Sentences in paragraphs are ordered logically. There are smooth transitions between paragraphs.
- 4 pts Sentences in paragraphs are ordered logically. There are no transitions between paragraphs.
- 3 pts Some paragraphs seem too long or short or focus on several main ideas. There are smooth transitions between paragraphs.
- 2 pts Some paragraphs seem too long or short or focus on several main ideas. There are no transitions.
- 1 pt Essay's ideas are scattered through uneven paragraphs.

Section 7. Editing

- 3 pts Conventions of grammar, punctuation, capitalization, usage, spelling, and paragraphing are used effectively; errors are few and minor.
- 2pts Reasonable control is demonstrated over punctuation and grammar.
- 1pt Errors in conventions distract the reader and make the text difficult to read.

Section 8. MLA Style

Front page and pagination are:

perfect 3 mostly accurate 2 not accurate 1 not formatted at all 0

Quotes are:

cited correctly 2 inconsistent 1 not cited properly 0 N/A 0

Authors and titles are cited:

accurately 2 inconsistently 1 inaccurately 0

Work Cited page is:

accurate 3 mostly accurate 2 present 1 not included 0

Score

40	100	A
39	97.5	A
38	95.0	A
37	92.5	A-
36	90.0	A-
35	87.5	B
34	85.0	B
33	82.5	B-
32	80.0	B-
31	77.5	C+
30	75.0	C
29	72.5	C-
28	70.0	C-
27	67.5	D+
26	65.0	D
25	62.5	D-

Essay 2: Poetry Explication

Select a poem from one of our class periods that we did not discuss in class (or that was not discussed in the Barnett text), and write an explication for that poem. In an explication, you establish your interpretation of a poem's message in the introductory paragraph, and then support your interpretation of that meaning with a line-by-line analysis in the remainder of the essay. Keep in mind that there should be a common theme or message that every line supports, as established by your thesis in the first paragraph. For instance, you cannot argue that a line in a poem describes the serenity of nature and that the next describes the speaker's misogyny, unless you make the case that the two are somehow part of the same unifying theme within the poem. Also note that your discussion should not focus on your personal experiences or reflections or on the life of the author.

The most important aspect of an explication is a **slow, careful** reading of each line. Do not rush through three lines of poetry in a single paragraph. It is not uncommon to spend an entire paragraph (or more) on a single line, explaining how you interpret the words to fit with your overall interpretation of the poem's meaning. This is particularly important for selecting your poem. You don't want to choose a poem that is too short and will not yield enough discussion on your part. Similarly, you do not want a poem that is too long because you will not have enough space to address the majority of the lines.

In your explication, discuss the diction and tone of the poem, describe the figurative language, and mention how the prosody (metrical feet/lines, endings, patterns of sound, stanzaic patterns---or lack of any of these components) contributes to its meaning. Review the sections on poetry in the *Literature for Composition* text [see the syllabus] for help generating ideas. Remember to select poems that we did *not* discuss in class and that the authors do *not* go into detail about. Email me if you are unsure if your poem fits the bill. If you would like, you may choose a poem that I did not assign, but you must let your groupmates know (and send them a copy if it is not in the text) right away so that they can read the poem in advance.

Length: 1,400-1,500 words, Times New Roman, 12 pt font.

Please follow these steps: Pick a few poems that resonate with you in some way. Annotate them in the Barnett text or on a print out. Proceed to write Process Writing #5. You may need to tailor some of the questions to fit the assignment but generally try to examine what appeals to you about these poems. For instance, although we will not have discussed this particular poem in class, you may describe how discussing a different poem may have affected your interpretation. Finally, work on your Exploratory Writing.

Grading Rubric

Section 1. Thesis Statement

- 3 pts The writer has a clear thesis which describes her/his interpretation of the poem.
- 2 pts The writer's thesis is present but not well explained.
- 0 pts The writer neglects to provide any clear explanation of her/his interpretation .

Section 2. Argument

- 4 pts The writer is consistent in making one clear point about the poem's meaning throughout the essay. (S)he backs up his/her thesis consistently in the line-by line analysis.
- 3 pts The writer has a clear thesis, his/her interpretation of the lines of poetry deviate at some points from the overall argument; with some effort, a consistent connection could have been made clearer.
- 2 pts The writer has many foci, making it difficult to see any consistent argument.
- 0 pts The essay is mostly summary or personal reflection.

Section 3. Discussion

- 3 pts The writer explores his/her claims in depth.
- 2 pts Some claims that the writer makes are explored in depth.
- 1 pt The writer moves quickly from one claim to the next without sufficient explanation or exploration.

Section 4. Elements of Poetry

- 3pts The writer discusses various elements of poetry in his/her explication.
- 2 pts The writer relies on a limited number of elements of poetry.
- 1 pt The writer briefly mentions the elements of poetry present in his/her poem, but the discussion is limited and/or does not connect to the overall thesis.
- 0pts The writer does not discuss the elements of poetry or how they contribute to her/his interpretation.

Section 5. Evidence

- 3 pts Student supports statements with sufficient quotes.
- 2 pts Student supports statements with insufficient quotes.
- 0 pts Student does not support statement with quotes.

Quotes:

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41	95.3	A
40	93.0	A-
39	90.6	A-
38	88.3	B+
37	86.0	B
36	83.7	B-
35	81.3	B-
34	79.0	C+
33	76.7	C
32	74.4	C
31	72.0	C-
30	69.7	D+
29	67.4	D+
28	65.1	D
27	62.7	D-
26	60.4	D-

Essay 3: Literary Research Project

This final essay requires that you read a text in depth in order to come up with a thesis (an original interpretation of the themes, message, themes, motifs, characters, etc). You must then research what other researchers have written about your selected topic using our library's databases. The goal is to use the researchers' thoughts in order to further your argument.

Oftentimes, you will be able to use other researchers' thoughts and ideas to bolster your own. For instance, if you are claiming that Ariel represents Prospero's conscience while Caliban acts as Prospero's baser instincts, you could support your argument with what Researcher X has written in her article about "Morality in Shakespeare." Sometimes these connections are self evident. Other times you are going to need to make these connections yourself. Remember the hierarchy of searching: first look for articles that closely relate in some way to your topic; afterwards, move on to works that speak about the work or the author in general. It is likely that there may be a passing mention to your topic that you can use. Resist the urge to look for articles that deal only with your search term. For instance, in the example above, do not rush to find articles on "morality" or "conscience" in general. Usually, this results in discussing the terms and not the literary work. You can also disagree with researchers who "disprove" your thesis. However, you must have a very thorough argument that shows why the researcher's logic is flawed.

Remember that you must begin your essay with a brief synopsis of the work that has been done related to your thesis. If no work has been done that relates to your thesis in any way, give a brief summary of the major themes that have been explored in the literature. In other words, if researchers haven't been looking at the representations of Ariel and Caliban as components of Prospero, what *has* the major body of work been emphasizing? Discuss what this focus misses, which segues nicely into your argument.

Please consult the handout on literary research for more information.

Essays must be 1,900 to 2,000 words in length, typed in Times New Roman, 12 point font.

Section 1: Thesis (10 pts)

Early on in the essay, the writer clearly states his or her thesis.

The writer's thesis is an original interpretation and arguable.

The writer's thesis is consistent throughout the essay.

Section 2: Introduction (15 pts)

The writer's introductory section gives a brief explanation of the previous work that has been researched.

The writer gives credit appropriately to previous work through MLA citations.

The writer gives a clear and brief explanation of how previous research is tied to his or her thesis.

Section 3: Evidence (15 pts)

The writer supports his or her argument with sufficient evidence from the text and from articles.

The passages are introduced with lead-in phrases.

The writer cites all passages from the text adequately in MLA style.

The significance of these passages is explained in detail.

Section 4: Language and Audience (10 pts)

The writer uses an academic tone (avoids informal language).

Section 5: Organization (10 pts)

The writer's sentences and paragraphs are ordered logically in terms of content and length.

Section 6: Editing (10 pts)

The writer's errors regarding grammar, punctuation, capitalization, word usage, and spelling are minimal.

Section 7: Discussion (10 pts)

The writer explores his or her claims in depth (the essay is not just a collection of quotes).

The writer's essay is the minimum number of words.

Section 8: MLA (10 pts)

The first page is accurate.

The writer correctly cites quotes in MLA style.

The works cited page is accurate or mostly accurate.

The writer fully engages with at least 7 peer-reviewed articles and incorporates them effectively in the essay.