

EXPLICATION ESSAY

Essay Due: Tuesday, October 13, 2008
Word Count: 1000 words + Works Cited

Explication

A poetry explication is a relatively short analysis which 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. Shelley's *Frankenstein* relies upon, even references, several Romantic-era poems. For this assignment, each student will choose a Romantic-era poem that is relevant to his/her chapters/letters. You must choose a poem from either our Mellor & Matlak anthology or the Related Texts on the Online Schedule. The poem **cannot** have been discussed in class. You may choose the poem based on a theme, an image, a literary construct, etc.

You may not use any outside resources for this explication, except the Harmon handbook or a dictionary – this assignment is really about you and your poem.

During the October 13th Digital Session, this Explication Essay will be incorporated into your web pages (and linked to various areas in your chapters/letters.) Place your Explication Essay into the class folder by 1pm, October 13, 2009 (prior to class). Please remember to include a Works Cited.

Getting Started:

- Read through your poem once silently and once out loud
- Annotate features in your poem that stand out in your initial reading
- Begin to identify the different language being used
- Begin to identify the poetic structure being used
- Paraphrase the poem (i.e., write a summary in your own words)

Writing the Explication:

In an explication of a poem, it's important first to make a clear statement of thesis for your paper. In other words, what do you intend to argue that the poem means? Or what is the theme of the poem?

Here is an extensive definition of theme from *Literature and the Writing Process*:

Theme has been defined in many ways: the central idea or thesis [of a literary work]; the underlying meaning, either implied or directly stated; the general insight revealed by the entire story; the central truth; the dominating idea; the abstract concept that is made concrete through representation in person, action and image. (116)

Essentially, your explication first will make an overall interpretation of the work by explaining the theme-what the work means. Remember that while there's no one correct answer about the theme of a work, it is possible to misread theme.

In the body of your paper, you will discuss the various literary elements of the poem that lead you to this interpretation. While you need not discuss every element of poetic analysis, you must provide clear and specific examples from the poem to back up your thesis, and every part of your paper should be devoted to proving that thesis. Be sure that each paragraph has a clear topic sentence, and is unified, dealing with only one topic per paragraph. You should quote liberally from the poem in providing evidence, as well. Your reading of the poem should be based only on your own interpretation; do not seek any critical material on the poem or poet, although you may certainly use dictionaries.

An explication is critical and interpretative. *Do not summarize the poem*; assume your reader already understands the basic situation of the poem. Explain instead the importance of the various elements in the

poem that enable you to reach an understanding of the entire poem.

Turning In Your Explication:

This explication essay is due on Tuesday, October 13, by 1pm. Submit to Turnitin.com prior to our class meeting. The Turnitin information is available on our greensheet.

Late papers will receive the penalization indicated on our syllabus. Failure to follow the below requirements will result in a lower grade.

- Submit to Turnitin.com
- Typed and double-spaced in 12pt font with one inch margins
- Works Cited page in MLA format
- In-text citations in MLA style (parenthetical citation)
- Name, date, course and section number typed at the top left corner of the first page
- Name and page number typed in upper right corner of every page following the first page
- Proofread everything before you turn it in; there should be no spelling or typographical errors.

GRADING:

The grade for this assignment will be based on your ability to communicate your ideas in a formal piece of writing. See the English Department guidelines in the greensheet.