

POETRY CRITIQUE GUIDELINES

Each critique of another poet's poem must reach a minimum of 100 words. Critiques are due by 48 hours after the class session has ended.

The critique should identify some positive aspect of the poem. Writing, "I really liked your poem," is not enough. Spell out why you like it—or didn't, or why you felt ambivalent.

The critique should identify aspects of the poem that could be improved. Get specific.

The critique should consider four crucial aspects of the poem: **imagery, sound, language, & figuration.**

- For imagery, ask whether the poem gives you something vivid to see, whether it needs more images, & whether the images worked for you. Not all images are visual (they can also be aural, tactile, olfactory, or gustatory), & there are poems that work well without a lot of imagery.
- For sound, consider how the poem makes its sounds resonate, with devices that may include alliteration, assonance, rhyme, phrasal repetition, & meter. A good summary of these devices can be found at "Elements of Poetry" on this course's webpage.
- For language, consider how fresh the turns of phrase are. Does the poem rely on cliché, or does it speak in a new & vibrant way? Where might the poet make improvements? You are also welcome to suggest alternative wordings.
- For figurative language, consider the poetic devices that might or might not be in play in the poem, including metaphor, metonymy, allegory, symbolism, simile, allusion, & personification. A good summary of figurative devices can be found at "Elements of Poetry."

While you should always look carefully at what appears on the page, it is also worthwhile to consider what is missing, or what could be added to the poem to make it more effective or interesting. This is particularly important when you find yourself running out of things to say in the categories above.

Lousy critiques will receive partial or no credit.