

First Short Essay Assignment

Due October 1.

Topic: Comparison & Contrast

This assignment asks you to compare and contrast Walt Whitman's 1855 *Leaves of Grass* and Allen Ginsberg's 1956 *Howl and Other Poems*. Choose a particular short passage from Ginsberg that bears significant relation to a short passage in Whitman.

Don't try to discuss the entirety of the two poems. Instead, choose a topic for comparison and contrast that is narrow enough for you to be able to deal with textual specifics, but not so narrow that you cannot meet the length requirement.

The successful essay will be framed by a comprehensive thesis with a definite point or points to make. The body of the essay will cite and analyze the chosen passages to support that central claim. A comparison and contrast essay will likely, but not necessarily, have a thesis listing the major points of similarity and the most important points of difference. You can either organize the comparison block by block, looking completely at one poem first, and then comparing the other to it; or point by point.

Include poetic terminology.

Format

This assignment (and all others) should be double-spaced throughout and paginated, with a regular font and margins. It should reach approximately five pages.

No need for a cover page. At the top of the first page, place your original title and your name. Append a Works Cited page, in accordance with *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*.

When citing poetry, it usually works best to cite a few lines at a time. Huge chunks of poetry do not lend themselves to close analysis, especially not in a short paper. If a citation covers less than three lines, you can cite it within your writing, using a slash marks to indicate line breaks. Here is an example: Whitman writes, "I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked, / I am mad for it to be in contact with me." ("Song of Myself" ll. 11-12) Notice that line numbers always appear after the quotation, in parenthesis. For Ginsberg, use page numbers: for example, "starving hysterical naked" ("Howl" 9). If the citation has more than three lines, indent it:

The atmosphere is not a perfume . . . it has no taste of the distillation . . . it is odorless,
It is for my mouth forever . . . I am in love with it,
I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked,
I am mad for it to be in contact with me. ("Song of Myself" ll. 9-12)

Closely analyze the words you cite. Thus, after a block quotation, there should be at least several sentences spelling out a reading of the lines you've cited.