

# Sex & Sexuality in American Poetry

## Second Short Essay Assignment

Due Wednesday, April 4.

*Provide a close reading of one of the five poems below.*

*Minimum five pages, double-spaced, paginated. At the top of the first page, place your original title and name. This assignment does not call for a Works Cited page, unless you choose to bring in critical material.*

Emily Dickinson, 414 (begins “‘Twas like a Maelstrom, with a notch”)

Emily Dickinson, 512 (begins “The Soul has Bandaged moments –”)

Gertrude Stein, “SUPPOSE AN EYES” in *Tender Buttons*

Hart Crane, “Praise for an Urn” in *White Buildings*

Hart Crane, “To Emily Dickinson”

This assignment asks you to do alone what we did as a group, to analyze and to interpret a short poem. You will need to choose a particular angle from which you wish to discuss the poem; you could, for instance, center your conversation on tone, speaker, theme, or imagery. Or, you could organize the paper around your personal response(s) to the poem. Find a thesis whose claim you can demonstrate and elaborate throughout the paper. It is important that whatever you decide to emphasize in your essay, you both analyze what the poem means as a whole and describe how its particulars work.

Imagine an intelligent reader who may have no knowledge of our class and no special understanding of poetry; in other words, write for a general, generic audience.

Think of your goal for this assignment as twofold: to explain a poem to your reader and to offer your own particular insights.

### Tips for This Assignment

- Although you should cite all or most of the poem within your paper, huge chunks of poetry do not lend themselves to close analysis. Thus, it almost always works better to cite a stanza, or a few lines, at a time. If your citation covers less than four lines, you can cite it within your writing, using a slash marks to indicate line breaks. If it has more than four lines, you must indent it.
- It is expected that you will closely analyze the words you cite. Thus, after a block quotation, there should be several sentences setting out a reading of the lines you’ve cited, paying attention to the individual words.

- Organize your reading of the poem: the poem cannot serve to organize your argument. Thus, you always need to introduce and contextualize the words of the poem that you cite. You must forge the connections between the different parts of the poem that you analyze.