

# Responding to a Poem

You will be responding to many poems over the course of this semester. Here are some helpful hints of what to write about. Do not limit yourself to these ideas. The following hints are here to show you what I expect and to get you started if you are stuck.

1. Briefly summarize the poem. “This poem is about \_\_\_\_\_.”
2. Give your general impression (briefly) “This poem made me see the sadness in a sunset in a way I had never experience before.”
3. React to the poem in one of the following ways:
  - the poem’s overall meaning
  - strong imagery
  - superb phrases
  - interesting lines
  - contrasts within the poem
  - fresh figurative language
  - the sound of the poem
  - the rhythm of the poem
  - the title
  - the voice
  - effective sensory details
4. Write about how these parts of the poem work with each other to form the whole.
5. Explain how the poet allowed you to see something in a new way.
6. Write about what made the poem effective or moving or powerful.
7. Write about how this poem relates to other poems that you’ve read.
8. Write about how this poem relates to the world at large.
9. Write about universal truths found in the poem.
10. Write about how this poem relates to you.
11. Write about how this poem fits in with your experience with the world.

\*\*Quote lines from the poem to support your ideas and opinions. You can quote a phrase, a line or two lines using short quote form. That’s just like when you quote from a novel.

- In parentheses is the line number instead of the page number.
- You signify a line break with a / .
- Be sure to keep all punctuation and line breaks the same as they are in the original poem.

Example of how to quote lines of poetry: In his poem “The Genius,” Collins shows us the brilliant poet doing mundane things like “standing. . . in a bathrobe” (1) or “stirring a pot of soup” (2). By doing so, he juxtaposes the creative genius with Everyman and in doing so makes the genius come down to earth. This poem is about finding inspiration in the mundane and how everyday things can be transformed into the poetic like the cloud that takes “the shape / of an astonishing idea” (21-22).

Notice how the quotations are integrated into my own sentences. The first quotation uses an ellipses to show that I left out the words “at a stove”. The second quotation shows where the line breaks. In parentheses I have noted both line numbers).