

RESEARCH PAPER ASSIGNMENT – LITERARY ANALYSIS OF A POEM

Due Monday, December 7, 2009:	Thesis statement
Due Tuesday, December 8, 2009:	MLA Heading
Due Wednesday, December 9, 2009:	Evidence 1, 2, & 3
Due Thursday, December 10, 2009:	Rough Draft
	Peer review – conventions- punctuation, spelling, & sentence structure; point-of-view
Due MONDAY, December 14, 2009:	FINAL COPY through turnitin.com

HOW TO WRITE A SHORT LITERARY CRITICISM/ANALYSIS

1. Choose one of the following poems:

POEMS covered in class

"Birches"	Robert Frost
"Dream Deferred"	Langston Hughes
"For the New Year, 1981"	Denise Levertov
"I Am Not I"	Juan Ramon Jimenez
"Moon Rondeau"	Carl Sandburg
"Pride"	Dahlia Ravikovitch
"Simile"	N. Scott Momaday
"Sonnet 18"	William Shakespeare
"Sonnet 30"	Edna St. Vincent Millay
"The Street"	Octavio Paz
"Woman"	Nikki Giovanni
"Women"	Alice Walker

2. Trace one symbol, theme or unique element used by the poet throughout the work. Use examples from the work (quotes) and quotes from literary criticisms to support your thesis.

- How does this image, symbol, theme, or element influence the work as a whole?
- What is the author's purpose in incorporating this image, symbol, theme, or element?

3. After choosing the work and literary device, write a thesis paragraph for your paper. For those having difficulty, fill in the following blank thesis:

In "*Name of Poem*" *Name of poet* **illustrates, shows, uses, demonstrates, utilizes** Literary Device **to show, illustrate, develop** identify theme. Poet's last name **wishes to, tries to, points out** explain the author's purpose.

EXAMPLE

In "Sonnet 18" William Shakespeare utilizes images of nature to illustrate how his lover excels in comparison. However, Shakespeare also points out that while the speaker's lover is superior to elements of nature, it is the lasting effect of the poem itself that will serve as a testament of the speaker's enduring love.

4. Find at least 2 quotes from the poem that will support this thesis. Do not choose extremely long quotes.

5. Find a quote from a print resource by a critic to support your thesis. This can be either a criticism on the actual poem or about the poet and his/her general style that would relate to your thesis. On lesser known poets, you may have to look up a biography that discusses the poet's style.
6. Find a quote from an electronic resource (not Wikipedia or a blog!) that is a criticism of the poem or the poet.
7. Photocopy the book page from which you get your quote as well as the inside book title page. Print out the page from the website from where you get your web quote.
8. Create your page one heading in MLA style. Also create a header for your page going to **View/Header-Footer**. Also click on **View/Formatting Palette**. On the palette under header click on the left Icon with # and it will automatically paginate your paper in order. Make sure you put our last name before the number and move it to the right side of the page. Here is the top of your paper:

Last 1

Your Name

Instructor's Name

Eng 2 Block #

Literary Analysis

15 December 2009

Paper Title

Begin your thesis statement.

- ◆ Format: MLA
- ◆ Margins: 1 inch Top
1 inch Bottom
1 inch Left
1 inch Right
- ◆ Double-spaced
- ◆ Heading 1st page heading
 - Subsequent pages – last name + page #
- ◆ Works Cited Page: MLA Style
- ◆ Copy of poem
- ◆ Copies of criticisms
- ◆ Resources:
 - Primary work source + 2 secondary sources criticisms (book, journal, collection or electronic) – MUST be appropriate, authoritative resources
- ◆ Turnitin:
 - All papers must be turned in to: <http://www.turnitin.com> to receive credit
- ◆ Check the class website:
 - <http://www.quia.com/profiles/petitmendez>
 - click your course's name
 - scroll down to the heading "Useful links"
 - Use the links "Works Cited" or "MLA Format" as a guide to your Works Cited page
- ◆ Check the next page for an example Literary Criticism and use it as a model for your paper.
- ◆ MLA format and page examples:
 - <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>
 - GREAT RESOURCE TO MODEL
- ◆ Check your textbook for additional instructions on research papers:
 - Pages 1105-1113
- ◆ Quoting notes:

Poem quotes over one line should use / between lines and line #'s. See page #1 of sample below.

- For four lines and under "use quotation marks and cite it like this" (Walker 1).

- For over four lines,

Indent 10 spaces from the left margin and write the quote all the way to the right margin

not using quotation marks. For a paper of this short length, I suggest that you do not use

quotes over four lines. Try to use short quotes that you incorporate within your comments,

because the most important part of this paper is your analysis and how you use critics to

support your thesis. Notice this is the opposite of under 4 lines. (Walker 2)

Alyssa Ensminger

Dr. Sarah Thomason

ENG 1101

Literary Criticism

15 March 1998

Deep Desires that Transcend Time

William Butler Yeats wrote two poems which are together known as the Byzantium series. The first is "Sailing to Byzantium," and its sequel is simply named "Byzantium." The former is considered the easier of the two to understand. It contains multiple meanings and emotions, and the poet uses various literary devices to communicate them. Two of the most dominant themes of this poem are the desire for escape from the hardships of this world and the quest for immortality. These are circumstances of the poet's life that influenced the composition of the poem. Those personal experiences and Yeats's skillful use of words come together to emphasize the need, or at least desire, that many people have for escape and immortality.

The first stanza of "Sailing to Byzantium" describes a society of people who live for the moment but ignore the wisdom and intellect that the poet finds important. In his frustration, the poet says in lines 21-22 that his heart is "sick with desire / And fastened to a dying animal." He is ready to leave this world of apathy and arrive in his holy land of Byzantium, which is a sort of paradise in his mind (Kennedy and Gioia 866-67). This is evidence of his desire for escape. In the second stanza, Yeats describes an aged man as "a paltry thing, / A tattered coat upon a stick" (9-10). It is believed that the poet is describing his own condition in these lines. The physical weariness he is experiencing causes him to want to be able to sing through poetry to keep his spirit alive. He believes that his poetry can help him to transcend time and old age, and that it will take him to his ideal city of Byzantium (Thorndike 1852). He prays that the sages of God will "be the singing-masters of my soul" (20). In other words, he wants to be taught how to write the poetry that will

sustain his spirit. This is the poet's attempt at achieving immortality. As long as his poetry still exists and is read, a part of his soul continues to live.

These two major themes in the poem are enhanced by the writer's use of symbolism. Byzantium, as mentioned before, is a sort of ideal land, comparable to the scriptural heaven. This is obviously one of the most predominant symbols in the poem. Another symbol that carries throughout the work is that of a bird. There is a reference to a bird in each stanza, but perhaps the best indicator of its meaning is found in stanza 4. Yeats uses the image of a bird "set upon a golden bough to sing" (30) to refer to the timelessness and spirit he craves. The bird that is set in gold is there forever, singing for all time, and the poet longs to be able to sing similarly through his poetry and therefore achieve immortality. Finally, the metaphor of singing is present in each stanza and reinforces the poet's desire to be able to create timeless music in poetry. He says that reading poems is a kind of "singing school" (13) where he can learn to step into that world of immortality (Thorndike 1853).

Similar to the way Yeats uses symbols to enhance this poem, he uses personal experience to inspire it. Twenty years prior to writing "Sailing to Byzantium," he was first exposed to Byzantine art. He saw mosaics that are regarded as the basis for most of the imagery in stanza 3. Also, when Yeats was nearly sixty years old, he suffered high blood pressure and had difficulty breathing. His wife took him on a Mediterranean tour to help him relax, and on that tour he saw mosaics that contrasted art with nature. This would explain his statement in the poem that "Once out of nature I shall never take / My bodily form from any natural thing, / But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make" (25-27). In addition, Yeats did not regret leaving his home on this excursion because he was depressed about his health and dissatisfied with the political situations at home. Therefore, it is probably that the imaginative voyage the man takes in the poem from one place to a more appealing one is directly influenced by the poet's feelings at that time (Allen 3728).

"Sailing to Byzantium" is a poem packed with emotion and meaning. It depicts a man striving to reach a better place while leaving a piece of his soul behind for all time. It expresses the weariness and

frustration that everyone experiences at some point, but especially with the aging process. It is a poem that encompasses human desires and emotions and presents them almost as though they were in a dream. However, it is almost as though the imaginative wording of the poem makes it easier to see the reality behind its message. The poem refreshes the craving people have for a better world with no hardships, and the need they have to leave a part of themselves here to sing eternally "Of what is past, or passing, or to come" (32).

Works Cited

Allen, James Lovic. "William Butler Yeats." Critical Survey of Poetry: English Language

Series. Revised ed. Vol. 8. Ed. Frank N. Magill. Englewood Cliffs: 1992. 3709-3729.

Kennedy, S. J., and Dana Gioia, eds. Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama.

6th ed. New York: Harper Collins, 1995. 866-868.

Thorndike, Jonathan L. "Sailing to Byzantium." Masterplots II: Poetry Series. Vol. 5. Ed.

Frank N. Magil. Englewood Cliffs: 1992. 1852-1854.

This essay was the Winning Essay for Literary Analysis, Beulah Davis Outstanding Freshman Writer Award.

The electronic citation for this essay would look like this:

Ensminger, Allysa. "Deep Desires that Transcend Time: Yeats' 'Sailing to Byzantium'" 28 Dec.

2008, Writing Literary Analysis: Guidelines and Web Sites. The RSCC Online Writing Lab.

15 Mar. 1998 < <http://www.rsccln.us/owl&writingcenter/OWL/Deep.html> >

Last Name 1

First Last Name
Ms. Petit-Mendez
Course:
Month/Day/Year

Title

Indent to begin essay. All
should be double-spaced
and have one inch margins

Last Name 2

Continue paper indenting
each new paragraph

Last Name 4

Works Cited

Last, first. "Article." Book title. City:
Publisher, year. pages.

Brown, John. "Fish." Under Sea.
New York: U of NV P, 2001. 25-32.

Last, first. "Article. (year written)
Website. Date accessed URL

List alphabetically by authors' last
names

Sailing to Byzantium William Butler Yeats

1 That is no country for old men. The young
2 In one another's arms, birds in the trees
3- Those dying generations - at their song,
4 The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
5 Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
6 Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
7 Caught in that sensual music all neglect
8 Monuments of unaging intellect.

9 An aged man is but a paltry thing,
10 A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
11 Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
12 For every tatter in its mortal dress,
13 Nor is there singing school but studying
14 Monuments of its own magnificence;
15 And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
16 To the holy city of Byzantium.

17 O sages standing in God's holy fire
18 As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
19 Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
20 And be the singing-masters of my soul.
21 Consume my heart away; sick with desire
22 And fastened to a dying animal
23 It knows not what it is; and gather me
24 Into the artifice of eternity.

25 Once out of nature I shall never take
26 My bodily form from any natural thing,
27 But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
28 Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
29 To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
30 Or set upon a golden bough to sing
31 To lords and ladies of Byzantium
32 Of what is past, or passing, or to come.