

Guidelines for Responding to Creative Work - Poetry

Overarching: Keep in mind the four poetic temperaments, as defined by poet Gregory Orr.

1. Story: dramatic unity a beginning, middle and end. Conflict, dramatic focus, resolution.
2. Structure: the satisfaction of measureable patterns. It is akin to higher math, geometry, theoretical physics the beauty and balance of equations. It manifests itself in sonnets, villanelles, sestinas (closed structures) and, to a lesser extent, in metrical lines, rhymed couplets and repeated stanza patterns (open structures).
3. "Music": rhythm and sounds. Its developments and resolutions involve syntax, the syllabic qualities of English that determine rhythm (pitch, duration, stress, loudness/softness), and the entire panoply of sound effects (alliteration, assonance, consonance, internal rhyme, etc.).
4. Imagination: the flow of image to image or thought to thought. It moves as a stream of association, either concretely (the flow of image) or abstractly (the flow of thought).

Use these categories to guide your critique. Try to pay attention to how the poem uses each of these temperaments. Which temperament is strongest? Which is the poem making best use of? Which temperament is weakest? Are any temperaments missing altogether?

Here are some specific concerns that you may note:

- Subject vs. theme of the poem (What is the poem's literal subject matter and what themes do you see?)
- Title - does it work, is it interesting?
- Structure - how does the poem use it? Is the work consistent?
- Layout and line breaks - how does the poem use it? Is the work consistent?

Elements to be leary of:

- Use of cliché
- Internally inconsistent images
- Superfluous nouns and adjectives
- Telling vs. showing

Role of primary responder:

Each writer will have one work for which they are the designated primary responder. This means they are responsible for writing up a 500-word response to the author (drawing from the criteria above). The write-up should begin with an objective overview of the poem's structure and theme/s, followed by a more in-depth analysis of the poem's craft elements. Strengths should be discussed first, followed by weaknesses, and lastly the responder should make recommendations for revision. The primary responder will also begin class discussion of the creative work during workshop time. The responder may read directly from their typed and printed response, or they can paraphrase their written response. Responders need to bring two copies of their response to workshop, one copy for the writer and one for Dr. Campbell.