

Overview

Each student will write a four to six page essay on American poetry. Choose three poems by one American poet. All poets must be approved by Mr. Davis or Mrs. Minoso. In a well-organized essay, show how this poet's work (represented by these three poems) is relevant to 21st century America. Specifically show how views, techniques, ideas, etc. expressed in those three poems could help 21st century Americans deal with some aspect of their society (rising unemployment, healthcare, politics, relationships, education, etc.). In short, your job is to answer the question, "Why and how is the work of this poet relevant today?"

The poems do not have to be specifically about that particular aspect of society; they just have to show that the work of this poet is relevant today. Maybe these poems offer something that might help someone today better deal with this issue or understand why it exists or maybe help us make better choices in terms of this issue. The slant you take here is up to you, but please keep me posted on what you are doing.

The Poems

Choose three poem by an American poet. The poems should be short in length (between eight lines and two pages long).

If you are having trouble choosing a poet (or poems by a poet in whom you are interested) I would suggest doing one of the following:

- (1) Flip through your literature book.
- (2) Flip through a comprehensive anthology of American poetry to get ideas.
- (3) Ask your school librarian or me to help you (but you may not do this until you have tried 1 and 2 first).

Sources

Other than your primary sources (your three poems) you will use four to six secondary sources in your essay. No more than three of these secondary sources can be electronic sources. You can use up to three electronic sources, but all of them need to be from the following:

Discovering Collection, Alabama Virtual Library, and Questia. You may not use any other electronic databased or sources.

Try to avoid these two common errors when looking for sources:

- a. Do not waste time looking for a critic who has the exact same opinion that you have.
- b. Do not look exclusively for evidence on your poems. Sources about your poet and (especially) sources about the aspect of American society about which you are writing will be helpful too.

Our school library is an excellent place to do research for this project, but it is not the only place. Civic libraries, such as Vestavia, Hoover, and Birmingham, as well as University libraries (UAB, Samford, etc.) are great places to do your research.

The Outline

As part of your assignment, you will create a sentence outline in parallel form for this essay.

MLA Style

Please follow all aspects (heading, margins, headers, works cited page, parenthetical documentation, etc.) of MLA style when writing this essay. If you are not sure about some aspect of MLA style, please consult the latest edition of The MLA Handbook. If you are still confused after doing so, please ask me. Between the two of us, I'm sure we can solve your problem.

Grading

You will receive a grade for each of the four steps that you will turn in (preliminary bibliography, thesis/topic outline in parallel form, rough draft, and final copy). All steps must be turned in at the beginning of class on the day that it is due. No step may be turned in until you have successfully completed the previous step.

Editing

You will have one in-class peer editing session after I give you back your rough drafts. Please note, I will not correct your rough drafts. I will check them.

Also, you may want to refer to the "Research" section of Diana Hacker's *A Pocket Style Manual*, pp. 92-102.

1. Format

Follow the MLA format contained in *A Pocket Style Manual* by Diana Hacker. Use the orange-coded MLA section of this book, pp. 104-154.

1. Items due

1. Annotated bibliography – due Friday, February 3, 2012 (<http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/skill28.htm>; for help on writing an annotated bibliography in MLA format). This may be handwritten or typed and is due at the end of the class period. I will read over them over the weekend and return to you on Monday.
2. Thesis statement – due Tuesday, February 7th
3. Photocopied sources – due Wednesday, February 8th
4. Sentence outline – due Friday, February 10th
5. Rough draft – due Thursday, February 16th
6. Final copy – due Tuesday, February 28th

All above items will be turned in with the final paper and will become property of the VHHS English department.

We will spend January 30th –February 3rd in the library for your research. You may need to spend time at another library or at home researching as well.

Grading

1. Annotated bibliography – 25 points
2. Thesis statement – 25 points
3. Photocopied sources – 40 points

4. Sentence outline – 30 points
5. Rough draft – 40 points
6. Final copy – 200 points

*The final copy will be graded for format, content, documentation, and words cited.