

Assignment Type: Major

Due Dates: Revision Day: Tuesday, October 13  
 Due Date: Wednesday, October 14

An explication is a careful analysis of a single poem. Its purpose is to discuss the meaning(s) of the poem through CONTENT, STYLE, and EVALUATION. An explication's purpose is not to rip the poem to pieces, but to show how each part contributes to the whole. A good explication requires some basic familiarity with the language of poetry. The writer of an explication tries to examine and explain all the details in a poem that an intelligent reader might consider.

An explication is easy to organize. You can start with the first line of the poem and keep working straight on through. An explication is not a paraphrase. A paraphrase simply puts the literal meaning of a poem into plain English - it is a sort of translation that might prove helpful in clarifying a poem's main theme (and a great starting point for your writing). In writing, an explication (unlike a paraphrase) does not simply restate the poem in plain terms. It explains the poem in great detail, examines all of the poetry elements, and evaluates each part of the poem (the poem as a whole).

To write about a poem well, you need to first experience it. It helps to live with the poem for as long as possible; there is little point in trying to fully understand the poem in a ten-minute inspection on the night before the paper is due. However challenging, writing about poetry has immediate rewards - the poem should mean something to you. Some problems you will probably encounter: finding a topic, organizing your thoughts, writing, revising, etc.

Format for English 521 Poetry Explication

Your explication should be a well-written essay in the area of 500-700 words. The best way to approach an explication is to begin with the first line and make notes about what you are reading. When you finish several readings of the poem, take another look at your notes and see if you have answers for all these elements:

**Content**

- First Impressions
- Surface Interpretation
- Poet or Poetic Voice
- Examination of Title
- Context
- Conflict
- Mood and Tone

**Style**

- Type of Poem
- Diction
- Figurative Language
- Imagery and Symbolism
- Structure (Rhyme Scheme, Rhythm)

**Evaluation**

- Theme Discussion
- Achievement of Purpose
- Links to Modern Life

Important Actions to Take Before Explicating:

- Read the poem straight through once, then read it a second time with a pencil in hand. Your analysis should follow the structure of the poem itself, starting with the first line and ending with the last.
- Concentrate on the poem's main purpose before you start discussing individual lines. This will save you the trouble of repeating yourself as you go through the text, and help you ensure that your analysis is working to relate individual parts of the poem to the poem as a whole.
- Remember that poetry explication is a focused and - as a paper - it does not need a thesis. Instead, think about: what is the poem doing and how is it doing it? These are the questions at hand; let your careful reading guide you to the answers.

Poetry Explication Rubric

Each category below will be assessed using the following scale:

Total Value of Explication = 72 Total Points

4 = Outstanding	3 = Strong	2 = Adequate	1 = Weak	0 = Unacceptable
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Score	Analysing Content and Subject Matter
	The paper interprets the poem completely, offering a complete reading of the work.
	The paper's interpretation of the work is accurate and well argued; avoids summary and comments critically.
	First impressions, subject and title have been identified and explored.
	Poet and poetic voice have been explored and supported. Comments about audience have been addressed.
	Student has made logical assumptions about context/conflict and has supported with poetic and researched evidence.
	Mood and tone are identified and reflect careful reading and analysis.

Score	Appreciating Style, Form, and Technique
	Poetry style has been identified (includes discussion of poetry type and structure)
	The paper contains a thorough discussion/analysis of the poem's diction.
	All figures of speech are identified and explained within the context of the poem for clarity and understanding.
	Imagery has been discussed/analyzed completely, offering a complete picture of the work.
	Lines/phrases are used to develop the interpretation of the work/support assertions, not to summarize.

Score	Theme Analysis and Evaluation
	Theme and purpose are discussed after thorough review showing competent understanding.
	The evaluation of a poem is a final summing up of the critical reader's thoughts about the poem.
	Evaluation offers a judgement about the poem's relevance to our own time, and relevance to the reader.

Score	Organization, Writing Style, and Mechanics
	Each section is focused and is clearly organized; paragraphs flow well and are connected with clear transitions.
	The paper has a strong and sophisticated style. If not, the paper may include the following stylistic issues: • wordiness or repetition • sentence structure • weak verb structures (overuse of be verbs) • informal tone and diction.
	The paper is free of grammatical errors. If not, the paper may include the following grammatical issues: • spelling or typographical errors • verb errors/tense shifts • comma splices/sentence boundary problems • sentence fragments.
	Peer editing grade. If student is prepared for and participates in peer editing session, he/she receives 4 points.