

11th Grade AICE Summer Writing Assignment

Ms. Todd

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Welcome to 11th Grade AICE English Literature! To help prepare you for the course, you will complete the following summer writing assignment, which is due to me five days after school starts. The following assignment will help you learn how to set up the poetry portion of Paper 1 (Drama and Poetry). We will have many writing assignments just like this one throughout the year.

The assignment needs to be typed (12pt, black, Times New Roman font, double spaced only) in a Google Doc. This needs to be shared with me and printed out for turn in along with your syllabus at the end of the first week of school. Please include your first and last name as well as the assignment title (11th Grade AICE Summer 2022 Assignment) in the top left corner. Check for errors!

The Laboratory

BY ROBERT BROWNING

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,
May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling whitely,
As thou plieth thy trade in this devil's-smithy—
Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?

He is with her, and they know that I know
Where they are, what they do: they believe my tears flow
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear
Empty church, to pray God in, for them!—I am here.

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,
Pound at thy powder,—I am not in haste!
Better sit thus and observe thy strange things,
Than go where men wait me and dance at the King's.

That in the mortar—you call it a gum?
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come!
And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,
Sure to taste sweetly,—is that poison too?

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,
A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree basket!

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give

And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live!
But to light a pastile, and Elise, with her head
And her breast and her arms and her hands, should drop dead!

Quick—is it finished? The colour's too grim!
Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and dim?
Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir,
And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer!

What a drop! She's not little, no minion like me—
That's why she ensnared him: this never will free
The soul from those masculine eyes,—say, “no!”
To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

For only last night, as they whispered, I brought
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought
Could I keep them one half minute fixed, she would fall,
Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does it all!

Not that I bid you spare her the pain!
Let death be felt and the proof remain;
Brand, burn up, bite into its grace—
He is sure to remember her dying face!

Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be not morose;
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close:
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's fee—
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me?

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill,
You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will!
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings
Ere I know it—next moment I dance at the King's!

Students need to answer the corresponding questions based on their interpretation of the poem.

1. Who is the speaker (voice--not always the poet)? What does the poem reveal about the speaker's character? In some poems the speaker may be nothing more than a voice meditating on a theme, while in others the speaker takes on a specific personality.

2. Is the speaker addressing a particular person? If so, who is that person and why is the speaker interested in him or her? Many poems are addressed to no one in particular and therefore to anyone, any reader. Others, while addressed to a specific person, reveal nothing about the person because the focus of the poem is on the speaker's feelings and attitudes.

3. Does the poem have a setting? Is the poem occasioned by a particular event? The answer to these questions will often be no for lyric poems. It will always be yes if the poem is a dramatic monologue or a poem that tells or implies a story.

4. Is the theme of the poem stated directly or indirectly? Some poems use language in a fairly straightforward and literal way and state the theme, often in the final lines. Others may conclude with a statement of the theme that is more difficult to apprehend because it is made with figurative language and/or symbols.

5. From what perspective (or point of view) is the speaker describing specific events? Is the speaker recounting events of the past or events that are occurring in the present? If the past events are being recalled, what present meaning do they have for the speaker?

6. Does a close examination of the figurative language of the poem reveal any patterns?

7. What is the structure of the poem? Since narrative poems--those that tell stories--reveal a high degree of selectivity, it is useful to ask why the poet has focused on particular details and left out others. Analyzing the structure of a non-narrative or lyric poem can be more difficult because it does not contain an obvious series of chronologically related events.

8. What do sound and meter contribute to the poem? Alexander Pope said that in good poetry, "The sound must seem an echo to the sense"--a statement that is sometimes easier to agree with than to demonstrate.

9. What was your response to the poem on the first reading? Did your response change after study of the poem or class discussions about it?

If you need HELP:

To appreciate the sounds and meaning of a poem, it is best to start by reading it aloud.

Once you've listened to the poem, pay attention to the words that make up the poem. Where a poem takes the reader is inseparable from how it takes the reader.

Poets pay close attention to diction or word choice (words have connotative (associative) and denotative (dictionary) meanings); every word in a poem counts.

Figurative language, or devices of language--i.e. imagery, metaphor, simile, personification, allusion, and symbol--allow us to speak non-literally in order to achieve a special effect.

Figurative language makes a comparison between the thing being written about and something else that allows the reader to better picture or understand it.

The music of poetry, or the sound patterns found in poetry, is created by various uses of language, such as alphabetical letter sounds; rhyme; alliteration; assonance; onomatopoeia; rhythm created by stressed and unstressed syllables (often most easily recognized in the poet's use of metrical feet); variations of line; tone; etc