

Poetry Explication

American Literature

Title: _____

Name: _____

Instructions: Simply put, explication is a brief analysis of the words, images, and other devices that make up a poem in order to establish possible meaning. Traditionally, that means discussing things like symbolism, rhyme scheme, conflict, motivation, even plot. Fill out this sheet completely and use as a study guide and discussion aid for the poem. Don't simply answer in one or two words; look deeper and explain each device works toward supporting a larger meaning. Every technique a poet uses is purposeful!

1. What does the title mean?

Take a look at the title and reflect on what it means:

2. Put it in your own words

Read the poem two or three times. You will see something different each time you read the poem. Write a brief summary of the poem in your own words. Highlight or list some of the words (nouns, verbs, phrases) that are important to understanding the poem.

3. What do you think the poem means?

Now think about the meaning of the poem, not just the obvious meaning of each word but what they mean beyond the literal. Do these words suggest something else? Answer these questions:

- Who is the subject of the poem? _____

- What are they talking about? _____

- Why do you think the author wrote the poem? _____

- When is the poem happening? _____
- Where is the poem happening? _____
- What is the poet's attitude? _____

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4. Poetic devices: Tools of the poet

Identify different poetic devices and how they convey the poem's message.

• *Point of view* _____

• *Tone* _____

• *Imagery* _____

• *Personification* _____

• *Metaphor* _____

• *Alliteration* _____

• *Assonance* _____

• *Repetition* _____

• *Punctuation* _____

5. Theme

Identify the theme (central idea) of the poem. How does the theme convey the poem's message?

6. Historical and cultural context

Integrate any knowledge regarding the author's life and the historical or literary period in which he or she lived. Explain how the author's history and culture (poverty, political unrest, war, lack of opportunities, social constraints, et al) may have influenced the poem.
