

Poem Annotation Instructions

The first thing you should do before you start writing your explication is get a good understanding of your poem. To do this, you should read the poem several times, annotating important things as you go. Here is a list of things you might want to annotate:

- Mark any words that you need to look up in the dictionary, and write down their exact meaning. If there are multiple meanings, make sure you note the one that seems the most relevant. Remember, each word is handpicked by the author for a specific purpose.
- If there are any words with obvious connotations, mark them, and write down what you think the connotation is.
- Paraphrase any lines that are confusing to you.
- If there is a repeated word or phrase, mark it, and write down why you think that word or phrase is repeated.
- Mark anything that might be a figure of speech (a phrase that should not be taken literally), and write down what you think that figure of speech signifies.
- Write down who you think the speaker is. Is the speaker similar to the author, or is he/she a persona made up by the author?
- Note any imagery the author uses. What kind of picture does the author paint in your mind, and how does that affect the tone/mood of the poem?
- Is there any verbal irony (sarcasm) in your poem? If so, mark it, and think about why the author is being so sarcastic.
- Note the overall tone of the poem. Why do you think the author uses this tone?
- Note any sound devices the author uses. What words does the author place emphasis on with those sound devices? How do the sound devices effect the mood or tone of the poem?
- **Include the completed version of this sheet at the end of your essay.**

Once you annotate your poem, you can start the process of thinking about the overall meaning of the poem. Why do you think the author wrote this poem? What message does the author want to convey to his or her readers?

Note: The poems I've assigned are actually songs. They contain some repeating lines. If there are any repeating lines in the poem, you only have to explain and analyze them once, but you should also mention in your paper that those lines are repeated and explain why they are repeated.