

One possible outline of a Criticism Essay for First Year Tutorial

Students may, if they wish to, follow this scheme in organising their criticism essay. Of course, they might approach it in a variety of other ways, depending on their preferences.

1. Introduction – you may state the general theme/s of the poem in your own words, highlighting the major issues that it explores.
2. The next paragraph may concentrate in greater detail on how these themes are handled or treated by the poet, focusing on the way he introduces, develops and the conclusion/s he arrives at in his poetic ‘argument’. You may choose to comment here on the structure of the sentences, structural elements like repetition and contrast, as well as his tone or attitude to his subject
3. Two further paragraphs should be devoted to a detailed and close analyses of the poetic language used in the poem to convey the poet’s concerns. This is the core of your critical essay and should ideally focus on some of the following techniques, which should not be merely pointed out but commented on in order to bring out their effectiveness in the context and their relation to the themes:
 - Diction** – why did he choose this word here, what did he want the reader to feel and think?
 - Images** – why these images, how are they connected to each other and the overall effect of the poem
 - Figures of Speech**- when they are present, what are they suggesting to us?
 - Rhythm** – what kind of sensation, mood, atmosphere is being created by the pace at which the lines are read?
 - Rhyme** – what type of rhyme, if any is being used throughout the poem and does it have any relevance to the points the poet is trying to make?
 - Tone** – what is the attitude that the poet adopts to his subject: sympathy, understanding, judgment or rejection. Quote words and expressions that reveal this tone.
 - Sounds** – examine the sounds of the words used in the poem, quote and comment on their use and effectiveness in conveying emotion, emphasis or imaginative description.
4. You may write a concluding paragraph expressing your overall reaction to the poem, such as what you liked or disliked in it, what feelings and insights it may have induced in you.

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