

# The Poetry Essay

## IN THIS CHAPTER

**Summary:** Examination of the poetry essay and its purpose as it is presented in the AP English Literature exam



### Key Ideas

- ★ Learn the types of poetry prompts you might encounter in the AP English Literature exam
- ★ Learn the basics of reading and notating a given poem
- ★ Learn the basics of constructing your response to the poetry prompt
- ★ Learn about the rubrics and rating of the AP poetry essays
- ★ Examine model student essays
- ★ Learn how rubrics were used to rate student essays

## Introduction to the Poetry Essay

It's obvious to any reader that poetry is different from prose. And, writing about each is different also. This chapter will guide you through the expectations and processes associated with the AP Poetry section.

### What is the purpose of the poetry essay?

The College Board wants to determine your facility in reading and interpreting a sustained piece of literature. You are required to understand the text and to analyze those techniques and devices the poet uses to achieve his or her purpose.

The AP Lit exam is designed to allow you to demonstrate your ease and fluency with terminology, interpretation, and analysis. The level of your writing should be a direct reflection of your critical thinking.



The AP Lit exam is looking for connections between analysis and interpretation. For example, when you find a metaphor, you should identify it and connect it to the poet's intended purpose or meaning. You shouldn't just list items as you locate them. You must connect them to your interpretation.



Before beginning to work with an actual poem, read the review of processes and terms in the Comprehensive Review section of this book. You should also have completed some of the activities in that section.

## Types of Prompts Used for the Poetry Essay

Not every poetry essay prompt is the same. Familiarizing yourself with the various types is critical. This familiarity will both increase your confidence and provide you with a format for poetry analysis.

### What kinds of questions are asked for the poetry essay?

Let's look at several typical questions that have been used as prompts for the poetry essay on the AP Literature exam in the past:



- How does the language of the poem reflect the speaker's perceptions, and how does that language determine the reader's perception?
- How does the poet reveal character? (i.e., diction, sound devices, imagery, allusion)
- Discuss the similarities and differences between two poems. Consider style and theme.
- Contrast the speakers' views toward a subject in two poems. Refer to form, tone, and imagery.
- Discuss how poetic elements, such as language, structure, imagery, and point of view, convey meaning in a poem.
- Given two poems, discuss what elements make one better than the other.
- Relate the imagery, form, or theme of a particular section of a poem to another part of that same poem. Discuss changing attitude or perception of speaker or reader.
- Analyze a poem's extended metaphor and how it reveals the poet's or speaker's attitude.
- Discuss the way of life revealed in a poem. Refer to such poetic elements as tone, imagery, symbol, and verse form.
- Discuss the poet's changing reaction to the subject developed in the poem.
- Discuss how the form of the poem affects its meaning.

You should be prepared to write an essay based on any of these prompts. Apply these questions to poems you read throughout the year. Practice anticipating questions. Keep a running list of the kinds of questions your teacher asks. Practice. Practice.

## Timing and Planning the Poetry Essay

Successful writing is directly related to both thought and structure, and you will need to consider the following concepts related to pre-writing.

## How should I plan to spend my time writing the poetry essay?

Remember, timing is crucial. With this in mind, here's a workable strategy:

- 1–3 minutes reading and “working the prompt.”
- 5 minutes reading and making marginal notes about the poem. Try to isolate two references that strike you. This may give you your opening and closing.
- 10 minutes preparing to write. (Choose one or two of the following methods that you feel comfortable with.)
  - Highlighting, underlining, circling, bracketing
  - Marginal mapping (see Chapter 4 for samples)
  - Key word/one word/line number outlining
  - Numerical clustering
- 20 minutes to write your essay, based on your preparation.
- 3 minutes for proofreading.



## Working the Prompt

It is important to understand that the quality of your essay greatly depends upon your correctly addressing the prompt.

### How should I go about reading the poetry prompt?

As we did in the prose section, we will deconstruct a poetry essay prompt for you now. (This is the same question that is in the Diagnostic/Master exam earlier in this book.)

You should plan to spend 1–3 minutes carefully reading the question. This will give you time to really digest what the question is asking you to do.

Here's the prompt:

**In “On the Subway,” Sharon Olds brings two worlds into close proximity. Identify the contrasts that develop both portraits in the poem and discuss the insights the narrator comes to as a result of the experience. Refer to such literary techniques as poetic devices, tone, imagery, and organization.**



In the margin, note what time you should be finished with this essay. For example, the test starts at 1 p.m. You write 1:40 in the margin. Time to move on.

Here are three reasons why you should do a 1–3 minute careful analysis of the prompt:

1. Once you know what is expected, you will read in a more directed manner.
2. Once you internalize the question, you will be sensitive to the details that will apply as you read the poem.
3. Once you know all the facets that need to be addressed, you will be able to write a complete essay that demonstrates adherence to the topic.

*Do this now.* Highlight, circle, or underline the essential terms and elements in the prompt. Time yourself. How long did it take you?

Compare our highlighting of the prompt with yours.

In “On the Subway,” Sharon Olds brings two worlds into close proximity. Identify the contrasts that develop both portraits in the poem and discuss the insights the narrator comes to as a result of the experience. Refer to such literary techniques as tone, poetic devices, imagery, and organization.

In this prompt, anything else you may have highlighted is extraneous.



When the question uses the expression “such as,” you are *not* required to use only those ideas presented; you are free to use your own selection of techniques and devices. Notice that the prompt requires more than one technique. One will not be enough. You *must* use more than one. If you fail to use more than one technique, no matter how well you present your answer, your essay will be incomplete.

## Reading and Notating the Poetry Selection

Finally, read the poem. Depending on your style and comfort level, choose one of these approaches to your reading:



1. A. Read quickly to get the gist of the poem.  
B. Reread, using the highlighting and marginal notes approach.
2. A. Read slowly, as if speaking aloud. Let the structure of the poem help you with meaning. (See the terms *enjambment* and *caesura* in the glossary at the back of this book.)  
B. Reread to confirm that you understand the full impact of the poem. Do your highlighting and make marginal notes.

*Note:* In both approaches, you *must* highlight and make marginal notes. There is no way to avoid this. Ignore what you don’t immediately understand. It may become clear to you after reading the poem. Practice. Practice. Concentrate on those parts of the poem that apply to what you highlighted in the prompt.

There are many ways to read and interpret any poetry. You have to choose your own approach and which specifics to include for support. Don’t be rattled if there is leftover material.

We’ve reproduced the poem for you below so that you can practice both the reading and the process of deconstructing the text. Use highlighting, arrows, circles, underlining, notes, numbers, and whatever you need to make the connections clear to you.

*Do this now.* Spend between 8–10 minutes working the material. *Do not skip this step.* It is time well spent and is a key to the high score essay.

### On the Subway by Sharon Olds

The boy and I face each other  
His feet are huge, in black sneakers  
laced with white in a complex pattern like a

*"When I read poetry out loud, it's easier for me to understand it."*

—Jennifer L.  
AP student

set of intentional scars. We are stuck on  
opposite sides of the car, a couple of  
molecules stuck in a rod of light  
rapidly moving through darkness. 5

He has the casual cold look of a mugger,  
alert under hooded lids. He is wearing  
red, like the inside of the body  
exposed. I am wearing dark fur, the  
whole skin of an animal taken and  
used. I look at his raw face,  
he looks at my fur coat, and I don't  
know if I am in his power— 10

he could take my coat so easily, my  
briefcase, my life— 15

or if he is in my power, the way I am  
living off his life, eating the steak  
he does not eat, as if I am taking  
the food from his mouth. And he is black  
and I am white, and without meaning or  
trying to I must profit from his darkness,  
the way he absorbs the murderous beams of the  
nation's heart, as black cotton  
absorbs the heat of the sun and holds it. There is  
no way to know how easy this  
white skin makes my life, this  
life he could take so easily and  
break across his knee like a stick the way his  
own back is being broken, the  
rod of his soul that at birth was dark and  
fluid and rich as the heart of a seedling  
ready to thrust up into any available light 20

25

30



Now compare your reading notes with what we've done below. Yours may vary from ours, but the results of your note-taking should be similar in scope.

**On the Subway**  
by Sharon Olds

*first part = narrator as  
observer*

*first person*

*oppositions*

The boy and I face each other

His feet are huge, in black sneakers ——— *dark*

*light* ——— laced with white in a complex pattern like a

*violence?* ——— set of intentional scars. We are stuck on ——— *no control*

*opposite sides of  
the "tracks"*

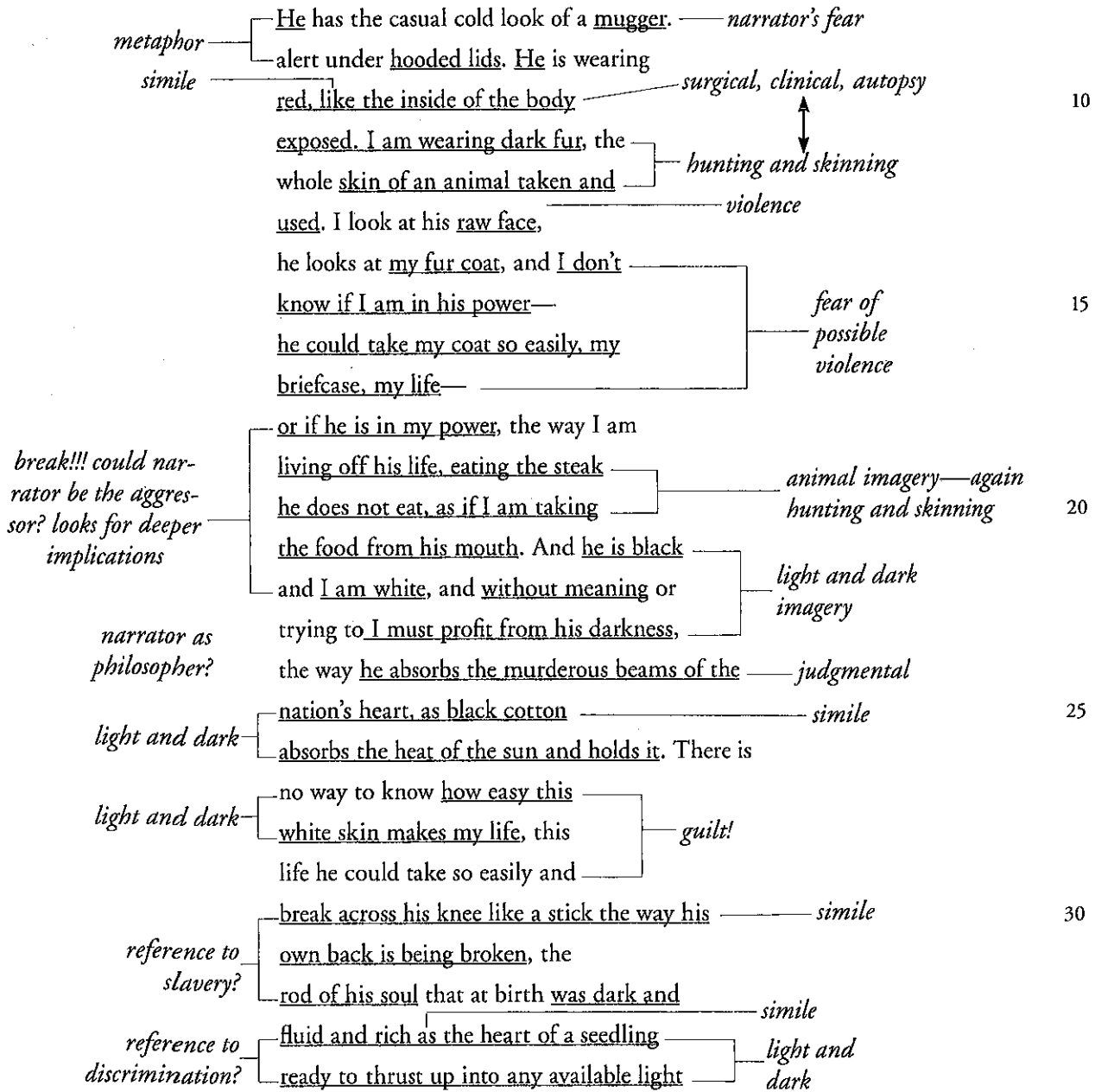
opposite sides of the car, a couple of

molecules stuck in a rod of light

rapidly moving through darkness.

*light and dark  
metaphor*

5



After you have marked the poem, review the prompt. When you look at your notes, certain categories will begin to pop out at you. These can be the basis for the development of the body of your essay. For example:

- Light and dark imagery
- Speaker's insights
- Contrast in status
- Metaphors
- Animal imagery
- Implied violence
- Shift in middle of poem
- Similes

Here's how we saw one category develop in the poem. Notice that we have ignored notes that did not apply to the prompt.

**Category:** Light and dark imagery

**Examples:**

“black sneakers”  
“moving through darkness”  
“and I am white”  
“black cotton”  
“how easy this white skin  
makes my life”

“laced with white”  
“profit from his darkness”  
“heat of the sun”  
“thrust up into any  
available light”

“rod of light”  
“he is black”  
“murderous beams”  
“dark and fluid”

**Comment:** The use of black and white imagery emphasizes the opposite ends of the spectrum represented by the speaker and the boy.

**Your Turn**

Now you choose a category that seems to pop out at you and trace its use through the poem.

**Category:**

**Examples:**

**Comment:**

We chose to examine poetic devices used in “On the Subway.”

**Category:** Poetic devices

**Examples:**

Simile	lines 3–4	“complex ... scars”
Metaphor	lines 4–6	“We are ... molecules”
Simile	lines 9–11	“He is wearing ... exposed”
Simile	lines 24–26	“he absorbs ... holds it”
Simile	lines 29–30	“he could ... stick”
Simile	line 32	“rod of his soul”
Simile	lines 32–34	“rod of his soul ... light”

**Comment:** By definition, similes and metaphors are comparisons. The poet uses these comparisons to develop and flesh out the juxtaposition of the life and situation of the speaker and the boy.

**Your Turn**

Refer to this chapter’s earlier section about the types of poetry prompts to expect on the exam. Construct two alternative prompts for Sharon Olds’s “On the Subway.”

**1<sup>st</sup> Alternative prompt:**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Alternative prompt:**



Notice that we have ignored notes that did not apply to the prompt.

Now choose the techniques that develop the contrasting portraits and reveal the narrator's perceptions.

In response to the prompt, we have decided that the techniques/devices we will analyze are:

- Imagery
- Poetic devices
- Organization



If you expand the above techniques/devices and the above categories into interpretive statements and support those statements with appropriate details that you've already isolated, you will be writing a defended essay.

## Writing the Opening Paragraph



Your opening statement is the one that sets the tone of your essay and possibly raises the expectations of the reader. Spend time on your first paragraph to maximize your score.

Make certain that your topic is very clear. This reinforces the idea that you fully understand what is expected of you and what you will communicate to the reader. Generally, identify both the text and the poet in this first paragraph.

*Do this now.* Take 5 minutes to write your opening paragraph for the prompt. Write quickly, referring to your notes.

Let's check what you've written.

- Have you included the poet and title?
- Have you addressed the portraits, contrasts, and insights?
- Have you specifically mentioned the techniques you will refer to in your essay?

Here are three sample opening paragraphs that address each of the above criteria.

### A

Sharon Olds in the poem, "On the Subway," presents a brief encounter between two people of different races which leads to several insights of one participant. This is accomplished through Olds's use of poetic devices, imagery, and imagination.

### B

The observer and the observed. One has control over the other. In her poem, "On the Subway," Sharon Olds asks her readers to enter the mind of a white woman who observes a young, black man as they travel together, neither knowing the other. Using poetic devices, imagery, and organization, Olds takes the reader on a ride through the contrasts and images that spark the imagination of the white onlooker.

### C

"And he is black and I am white" establishes the basic contrast and conflict in Sharon Olds's poem, "On the Subway." Through imagery, organization, and poetic devices, Olds creates two contrasting portraits. The narrator's confrontation becomes the reader's also as she reveals her troubling fears and insights through her images and comments concerning her encounter with the black youth.

*Highlight these points to see if you've done them. You may be surprised at what is actually there.*

These three introductory paragraphs identify the poet and the title and clearly indicate an understanding of the prompt. Now, let's note what is different about each.

Sample A is a straightforward, unadorned restatement of the prompt. It is correct, yet lacks a writer's voice. (If you are unsure of how to proceed, this is the type of opening you may want to consider.) This type of opening paragraph will at least allow you to get into the essay with as little complexity as possible.

Sample B immediately reveals the writer's confidence and mature writing style. The prompt is addressed in a provocative and interesting manner, letting the reader know the tone of the essay.

Sample C incorporates a direct quotation from the poem which indicates the writer is comfortable with citation. The writer also links the reader with the poem and feels confident that his or her judgments about the encounter are supportable.

*Note:* There are many other types of opening paragraphs that could do the job as well. The paragraphs above are just a few samples.

Does your opening paragraph resemble any of these samples?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

## Writing the Body of the Poetry Essay

When you write the body of your essay, take only 15–20 minutes. Time yourself and try your best to finish within that time frame.

Since this is practice, don't panic if you can't complete the essay within the allotted time. You will become more and more comfortable with the tasks presented to you as you gain experience with this type of question.

### What should I include in the body of the poetry essay?

1. Obviously, this is where you present your interpretation and the points you wish to make that are related to the prompt.
2. Use specific references and details from the poem.
  - Refer directly to the original. Don't always paraphrase.
  - Place quotation marks around those words and phrases that you extract from the poem.
3. Use "connective tissue" in your essay to establish adherence to the question.
  - Use the repetition of key ideas from your opening paragraph.
  - Try using "echo words" (i.e., synonyms such as *insight* can be inference/observation/perception; *fear* can be apprehension/insecurity).
  - Create transitions from one paragraph to the next.

To understand the process, carefully read the following sample paragraphs. Each develops one of the categories and techniques/devices asked for in the prompt. Notice the specific references and the "connective tissue." Also, notice that details that do not apply to the prompt have been ignored.



## A

This paragraph develops **poetic devices**.

"Black sneakers laced with white in a complex pattern like a set of intentional scars" is the jarring simile Olds uses to establish the relationship between the woman and the "boy" on the subway. Immediately, the poetic device implies the bondage and pain of the oppressed minority and the deliberate complexity of race relations. This idea of interwoven lives is further developed by the metaphor that links both as "molecules stuck in a rod of light." The youth, however, is compared to a reptile with "hooded lids," and all the fear and repulsion associated with this creature is transferred to the boy who is hiding his true intentions with such a look. The woman follows her fearful insights with still another extreme simile—worrying about "this life he could take so easily and break across his knee like a stick." Still, she proves the complexity of her thoughts by creating a sympathetic metaphor to ponder "the rod of his soul—the heart of a seedling" yearning to grow into the light.

## B


This paragraph develops **imagery**.

The images in the poem are predominantly drawn from the contrast between light and dark. "Black sneakers," "white laces," "rod of light rapidly moving through darkness" are all images that immediately establish the contrast that is at the heart of the meaning of the poem. This juxtaposition becomes reality in lines 21–22 when we learn that "he is black and I am white." The problem is how the "white" profits from his "darkness." [line 23] What should be light, "the beams of the nation's heart," is murderous, and he "as black cotton," absorbs this heat. This angry contrast leads the speaker to her insight about her life in lines 26–28. Empathizing with the black youth, the narrator moves beyond her prejudices and finds promise in the last three lines which see the dark being born into the light.

## C

This paragraph develops **organization**.

The organization of "On the Subway" is rather linear. Olds's narrator proceeds from a frightened observer to a philosophical questioner to finally a mature, sympathetic forecaster of the promise of the young, black man. The first thirteen lines provide the interior monologue of a woman who sits across from a young, black male and looks him over from head to toe. In line 10 she begins to move deeply into the hidden person across from her, with this "introspection" ending in lines 14–16 with her questioning who actually has power over whom. Line 18 presents a true shift from personal observation to an almost societal conscience which is sympathetic to the plight of all blacks in America as seen in lines 21–26. Bringing the reader back to the opening section of the poem, the speaker intimates at the promise of the young man with "the rod of his soul . . . rich as the heart of a seedling/ready to thrust up into any available light." [lines 32–34]



Refer to our list of recommended poets at the back of this book. Look for poems similar in length and complexity to those we've provided and apply a variety of prompts. You can try these alone, with a study group, or with your class.

*Note:* Look at the last sentence of Sample B on imagery: “Empathizing with the black youth, the narrator moves beyond her prejudices and finds promise in the last three lines which see the dark being born into the light.”

This final sentence would be fine as the conclusion to the essay. A conclusion does not have to be a paragraph. It can be the writer’s final remark, observation, or reference and may be only a sentence or two.

*Do this now.* Write the body of your essay. Time yourself. Allow 15–20 minutes to complete this task.

## Sample Student Essays

Following are two actual student essays followed by a rubric and comments on each.

### Student Essay A

The three sections of “On the Subway” by Sharon Olds express the complicated relationship between Caucasians and African-Americans. In the first section the author presents an exposition that contrasts a white person with a black (lines 1–13). In the second, the speaker begins to develop the apparent disparities so that inter-relationships emerge (lines 13–20). In the third, the narrator gains insight into how this scene is representative of American culture at large (lines 20–34). 5

The imagery Olds uses in the first section emphasizes the difference between the white woman who is the narrator and the observer and the black boy, who is the observed, as they ride the subway. The shoes he is wearing are black “laced with white” (line 3). The speaker describes the white zigzags as “intentional scars” (line 4). The scars allude to the discrimination against the black man by white society. The adjective “intentional” denotes that whites purposely harm blacks. The image contrasts whites with blacks: whites are powerful; blacks are subservient. Similarly, the two characters are described as being “stuck on opposite sides” of the subway car; they are separated permanently from each other (lines 4–5). The description of the clothing is a third contrasting element. Here, the black man is “exposed,” while the speaker is covered in fur (line 11). This image reinforces the opposition between the white woman and the black boy. 10

The second section sees a shift in tone. Where the first section is composed of finite physical descriptions, the second is more philosophical and indicates the speaker’s apprehension. She is uncertain and writes that “I don’t / know if I am in his power . . . or if he is in my power” (lines 14–15, 18). Such a statement is important because it illustrates that the boundaries between whites and blacks are not as clear-cut as they may seem. Perhaps the speaker begins to realize that the image of the subservient black and the powerful white presented in the first section of the poem is incorrect. The repetition of the word “Life” is another way the interconnection between the two characters is developed. The narrator cannot decide whether her wealth usurps the power of the black man or whether his potential aggression usurps her power. (lines 17, 19). 15 20 25

The tone, again, shifts in the third segment. Here, it is clear that the speaker is trying to gain an understanding of the relationship between the white world and that of the black boy. At first, she realizes that they are different because "he is black and I am white" (lines 21–22). The image of the "black cotton" alludes to slavery, once again referring to the scars, or distinctions, imposed by the white society. Yet, at the end of this section, the differences between the two people are strangely reconciled. This is accomplished using the technique of repetition. Instead of repeating a word as in the second section, an image is repeated. Lines 29–31 state that the black man could hurt the white woman; he could "break [her] across his knee the way his own back is being broken." In other words, both whites and blacks can hurt; both races can be injured by either repression or aggression, and so they are connected through their pain and unrealized dreams.

### Student Essay B

In the poem "On the Subway" by Sharon Olds, she contrasts the worlds of an affluent white person and a poor black person. The two people have many opposing characteristics, and the author uses literary techniques such as tone, poetic devices, and imagery to portray these differences. The narrator is the white woman, and she realizes how people get "stuck" in places of society based on their skin color. The word "stuck" is repeated twice to stress this idea.

The major difference between the two people is obviously their skin color. This one difference causes many aspects of each person's life to be unlike the other's. The white woman is above the black man in the eyes of much of society. The narrator states that "without meaning or trying to I must profit from his darkness." This is basically saying that the black man is living in a white man's world, where his skin color alone has given him a predisposition in the eyes of many. This idea is further supported when the speaker thinks "There is no way to know how easy this white skin makes my life." Olds uses the following simile to show the black man's situation: ". . . he absorbs the murderous beams of the nation's heart, as black cotton absorbs the heat of the sun and holds it."

Another contrast that is in the poem is the rawness of the black man versus the sheltered and refined look of the white woman. Olds uses a simile to describe the red that the black youth is wearing: "Like the inside of the body exposed." The white woman is the outside of the animal wearing a fur coat. The black man is the inside of the body, the true animal, while the white woman is not; she is simply wearing the outer covering of an animal.

As a result of this experience, the narrator realizes that there is a balance of power and control between her and the young man. She realizes that at times, and in certain situations, she rules, while in others the black man does. Her life, her "easier" life, can be taken away by the black youth. Who has the power on the train? The big, strong, raw black man or the weaker, but richer, white woman? Society has given the white woman a false sense of superiority and security. She is protected by wealth, her job, and her possessions, but when alone on the subway with this black man, she feels fear. She is confronted by her own vulnerability. The black youth who is being broken by society can break the white woman who is society.

Overall, this poem effectively contrasts the two people and exposes a fallacy of society. The black man must live in eternal darkness because he is never allowed to "thrust up into any available light."

## Rating the Student Essays



Let's take a look at a set of rubrics for the poetry essay.

A 9 essay has all the qualities of an 8 essay, and the writing style is especially impressive, as is the interpretation and/or discussion of the specifics related to the prompt and poem.

An 8 essay will effectively and cohesively address the prompt. It will cite appropriate devices called for in the question. And, it will do so using appropriate evidence from the poem. The essay will indicate the writer's ability to interpret the poem and/or poet's attitude toward the subject in a clear and mature style.

A 7 essay has all the properties of a 6, only with more complete, well-developed interpretation and/or discussion or a more mature writing style.

A 6 essay adequately addresses the prompt. The interpretation and/or discussion is on target and makes use of appropriate specifics from the test. But these elements are less fully developed than scores in the 7, 8, or 9 range. The writer's ideas are expressed with clarity, but the writing may have a few errors in syntax and/or diction.

A 5 essay demonstrates that the writer understands the prompt. The interpretation/discussion is generally understandable but is limited or uneven. The writer's ideas are expressed clearly with a few errors in syntax or diction.

A 4 essay is not an adequate response to the prompt. The writer's interpretation/discussion of the text indicates a misunderstanding, an oversimplification, or a misrepresentation of the given poem. The writer may use evidence that is not appropriate or not sufficient to support the interpretation/discussion.

A 3 essay is a lower 4 because it is even less effective in addressing the prompt. It is also less mature in its syntax and organization.

A 2 essay indicates little success in speaking to the prompt. The writer may misread the question, only summarize the poem, never develop the required interpretation/discussion, or simply ignore the prompt and write about another topic altogether. The writing may also lack organization and control of language and syntax. (*Note:* No matter how good a summary is, it will never rate more than a 2.)

A 1 essay is a lower 2 because it is even more simplistic, disorganized, or lacking in control of language and syntax.

*Note:* The essay is really a first draft. The readers know this and approach each essay with this in mind.

### Student Essay A

This is a high range essay (9–8) for the following reasons:

- A sophisticated, indirect indication of the task of the prompt and organization.
- Tightly constructed and thorough discussion of the contrasts and opposition in the poem.
- Effective analysis of imagery (lines 1–13, 15–17).
- Effective and coherent discussion of tone.
- Understanding of the subtleties of tone (lines 19–21).
- Strong support for assertions and interpretations (lines 22–29).
- Effective analysis of literary techniques (lines 11, 33–34, 36–38).

This high-ranking essay is subtle, concise, and on target. There is nothing that takes away from the writer's focus. Each paragraph grows out of the previous one, and the reader

*"Even though I hate doing it, my writing really improves when I spend the time revising what I've written."*

—Mike T.  
AP student

always knows where the author is taking him or her. The syntax, diction, and organization are mature and confident.

### Student Essay B

This is a middle-range essay (7–6–5) for the following reasons:

- Clearly identifies the task, the poem, and poet.
- States the techniques that will be discussed in the essay.
- Lacks a transition to the body of the essay (lines 6–7).
- Provides an adequate discussion of the insights of the speaker (lines 23–25).
- Cites appropriate specifics to support the thesis of the essay (lines 14–16).
- Uses standard style, diction, and structure, but does not reflect a sophisticated or mature writer.
- Attempts a universal statement within a rather repetitive and summary-like conclusion (lines 32–34).

*How about sharing these samples with members of your class or study group and discussing possible responses?*

While adhering to the prompt, this midrange essay is an adequate first draft. It shows promise but comes dangerously close to paraphrasing lines. The analysis is basic and obvious, depending on only one device, that of simile. The writer hints at the subtleties but misses the opportunity to respond to further complexities inherent in the poem.

*Note:* Both essays have concluding paragraphs which are repetitive and mostly unnecessary. It is best to avoid this type of ending.

## Rapid Review

Need a Quick Review? Spend a minute or two reading through . . . that'll do.

- Review terms and techniques.
- Become familiar with types of poetry questions (prompts).
- Highlight the prompt to make certain you are aware of required tasks.
- Time your essay carefully.
- Read the poem a couple of times.
- Spend sufficient time “working the poem” before writing.
- Mark up the poem.
- Create a strong opening paragraph, including prompt information.
- Refer often to the poem for concrete details and quotes to support your ideas.
- Always stay on topic.
- Avoid simply paraphrasing.
- Include transitions and echo words.
- Practice—vary the prompt and your response.
- Consult the models and rubrics for self-evaluation.
- Share ideas with others.

