

Poetry Presentations

Basic Assignment. Find a poem you love in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*. Prepare a 20 to 25-minute presentation of that poem for the rest of the class. Organize your presentation in whatever way seems suitable to you. A typical presentation might consist of a brief introduction of the poem, a reading of it, a short explication of it, and an exchange of ideas and responses in a class discussion. You might ask the class some questions, and they can ask you a few.

As you prepare your poem, ask yourself questions like: What does the audience need to know *before* they hear this poem? What does the poem sound like? How should I read this poem? What are the most interesting, striking, significant, or unusual aspects of this poem? What does the poem mean to me? What is the relationship between the poem's form and its content? What perspective or approach is most fruitful for understanding this poem? etc. You might finish your presentation by pointing the class to difficult or ambiguous sections of the poem (the parts you still have questions about) and asking for a few responses or interpretations. The class will also want to ask you some questions.

Alternative Assignments. The purpose of this assignment is to give everyone a chance to choose a poem and start a discussion. You do not, however, need to follow the outline suggested above. Instead, you may invent your own kind of poetry presentation. Here are some possible ideas for alternative kinds of presentations:

- read and discuss with the class a poem that you wrote
- invent an activity that involves the class in the exploration of a poem or some aspect of poetry
- write a parody of a famous poem, let the class read the original and your parody, and then lead a discussion about both
- form a pair who will lead class for a class period -- the two of you will select the poem or poems to talk about and the way we talk about them
- develop a presentation focused on performing poems
- write a song using the words of a certain poem -- perform the song for the class

If you want to do an alternative presentation, please see me. We'll talk about what you might do and how we might fit you or your group into the schedule. I'm open to all kinds of ideas.

Written Work. The final part of this presentation assignment involves writing. **One week following your presentation**, you should turn in to me a **typed two-page reflection** on your presentation. In this short paper, discuss:

- What were the major aims of your presentation? What were you trying to do?
- Which part or aspect of your presentation did you find most successful? Why?
- Which part or aspect of your presentation did you find least successful? Why?
- What did you learn about your poem (or yourself) while preparing the presentation?
- [Only for those who do a group presentation.] How did your group work together? Who did what? What was your major contribution to the group effort?

Dates. On **Monday, September 26**, I will send around a sign-up sheet and everyone can choose a poem and a date for their presentation. On this sheet, write the title and author of your poem as well as the page number(s). The presentation dates are **October 26 through November 18**. The very last day to hand in reflection papers is **Monday, November 28**.