**Explicating Your Poem**

1. Who is the speaker? Is it the poet or a character/persona the poet takes on?  What is the tone of voice adopted? Can you detect any [irony](http://www.nku.edu/%7Erkdrury/poetryexplication.html#Irony)? How precisely is the speaker defined?  (Note:  You should refer to the speaker as "the speaker" and not as "the poet," even if the voice seems to be the poet's own.
2. Who is the speaker's audience? Does the audience help to define the speaker?
3. What is the poem's literal meaning?
4. What is the poem's theme? Is the theme stated explicitly or implicitly? What lines from the poem support your claim?
5. What is the poem's [structure](http://www.nku.edu/%7Erkdrury/poetryexplication.html#Form)? Does it develop in a straightforward manner to a logical conclusion? Is there a shift or turn in its development? How is the shift indicated? Why does a shift take place?
6. How is the poem organized? How does its organization contribute to the development of the poem's subject or theme?
7. What is the poem's [meter](http://www.nku.edu/%7Erkdrury/poetryexplication.html#Meter)? How does it contribute to the development of the poem's subject or theme? Are there any strategic points where the poem breaks with its [rhyme scheme](http://www.nku.edu/%7Erkdrury/poetryexplication.html#Rhyme)? Why?
8. Do the lines end with a completion of a thought or closed punctuation (i.e., are they [end-stopped](http://www.nku.edu/%7Erkdrury/poetryexplication.html#Meter))? Or do the lines flow without pause? How does this affect your understanding of the poem?
9. How would you characterize the poem's language or [diction](http://www.nku.edu/%7Erkdrury/poetryexplication.html#Diction) ? Which words effect your response to the poem and determine it’s tone?
10. What [imagery](http://www.nku.edu/%7Erkdrury/poetryexplication.html#Imagery) is developed in the poem? Does the poet use [metaphor](http://www.nku.edu/%7Erkdrury/poetryexplication.html#Figurative), [simile](http://www.nku.edu/%7Erkdrury/poetryexplication.html#Figurative), [personification](http://www.nku.edu/%7Erkdrury/poetryexplication.html#Personification), etc? Does he/she use [symbolism](http://www.nku.edu/%7Erkdrury/poetryexplication.html#Symbol)? Considering the poem's subject matter, are these images obvious ones, or are they unusual and unexpected? Do they contribute to the poem's subject or theme? If so, how?
11. Is there any evidence of repetition, [alliteration](http://www.nku.edu/%7Erkdrury/poetryexplication.html#Rhyme), [onomatopoeia](http://www.nku.edu/%7Erkdrury/poetryexplication.html#Figurative), or other sound effects in the poem? What do they contribute?