

What is a Poetry Explication?

A poetry explication is a short analysis which describes the possible meanings and relationships of the words, images, and literary devices that make up a poem.

Learning Objective: Connect a poem's big ideas with its structural features (the pieces used to build the poem such as literary devices.).

Instructions:

Step 1: Annotate your poem. (analyze the pieces of the poem)

Step 2: Fill in your explication worksheet.

Step 3: Write a 2 paragraph explication of your poem following the below outline.

Outline of a Poetry Explication

Paragraph 1 (at least 8 sentences)

Using your explication worksheet, outline the big ideas in the poem. Simply link all your answers on the worksheet together into a smooth following paragraph. Don't forget to introduce your poem and poet in the first sentence.

Paragraph 2 (at least 8 sentences)

Explain the poem line by line by pointing out its details / parts and their overall impact on the audience. You can't include everything so you will need to make some choices.

When writing your explication . . .

1. Use "the speaker" and / or "the poet," not the author's name.
2. **Quote** from your poem as you analyze it. (e.g. In the line "I hurt myself today," the speaker suggests that)
3. **Use formal language (no "I")**
4. Use **strong verbs** (e.g. *dramatizes, emphasizes, illustrates, implies, etc.*)
 - i. The speaker states that . . .
 - ii. The next line dramatizes . . .
 - iii. The use of the word " . . ." illustrates . . .
 - iv. The metaphor " . . ." implies . . .

Explication Worksheet

1. What are the big ideas in the poem that apply to the world, not just this situation? What conflicts (problems, tensions) or themes (universal ideas) does the poem present?

This poem dramatizes the conflict between

2. Who is the speaker (narrator speaking in the poem)? Define and describe the speaker and his/her voice. What does the speaker say? Who is the audience (who are they talking to)?

3. What happens in the poem? (summarize the poem)

4. When does the action occur? (date, time period, time of day / time of life)

5. Why does the speaker feel compelled to speak at this moment? What is his/her motivation? What's the point?

6. Did you like or dislike this poem? Why?

Example 1

Explication Paragraph

This poem dramatizes the conflict between man vs. himself, and/or identity vs. drugs. "I" is the speaker. The speaker regrets what he has accomplished in life, his voice lets out guilt and remorse, along with a sense of defeat. The poet says how he lost everything in life and how he gave-up. And all the failure he committed. The audience is his beloved family members and all the people he is sharing his story with. In the poem, the poet happens to describe what happened in his life which brought him to the state to write this poem. This action occurs at the older age of the poet's life, when he realized his mistake and knew it's too late to go back and change what he has done. The speaker feels compelled to speak at this moment because he wants to warn people what kind of person he is and not to come near him unless he/she wants to be hurt. The poet's motivation is his internal pain, and the thought of not hurting people anymore.

The first line of the poem is "I hurt myself today, To see if I still feel." The poet is immediately claiming responsibility by stating the word "I" as his first word. In the second phrase, it's as if he forgot what touch and feeling were to him. In the second phrase, it's as if everything in his life is artificial except the pain that he feels everyday. When the poet states "The needle tears a hole," it's as if he gave life to the needle and it owns him per every sting. The word "familiar" tells us how accustomed he

is to using drugs. By using the word "kill" in the next phrase, it lets out very strong emotions and how the poet sees his past, but he can't forget. The fifth phrase tells us he regrets what he has become, but the phrase doesn't tell the audience who the author is referring to when he says, "My sweetest friend". That could either mean the author is referring to the drug or one of his beloved family members. The next phrase shows the audience how lonely the poet is. By the author stating his "empire of dirt", means he has accomplished nothing but failure. "I will let you down, I will make you hurt," shows us the poet is not dependable and not fit for chances. By saying "I wear this crown of thorns," can be understood from a physical and mental view. Because when you touch his crown of thorns, it will hurt your hand along with his head. Same for mentally as well, "liar's chair" tells us he is not truthful. The next phrase tells us that the poet's past is full of deceit and broken dreams. "Beneath the stains of time, the feelings disappear," tells us that after so many years of using drugs, his body became numb. The next phrase is about how everybody the author knew moved on, except him. And the last two phrases show us that if the author had a second chance to start life fresh again, he would find a way not to get into the darkness which ruined his life.

~~THE~~
Focus on:
~ Impact of
Figures of
Speech

Example 2

Explicating "Hurt" poem

Dec. 14/06

This poem dramatizes the conflict between Identity and addiction, and regret and reality. In this lyrical poem The poet has had a battle with drugs drugs took over the poet's life and sole, stripped him of his family and friends. Poet has no personal life but has had Monetary success. The poet would start over if he could. The poem portrays how drugs have grasped his life and pulled it away from him. The action in this poem takes place somewhere in the 1900's there's no clue to what time of day. The poet wrote this later in his life after seeing first hand what drugs can do to one's life, the poet was probably over 50 when he wrote the poem.

The poem presents the reader with a confused beginning. "I hurt myself to see if i still feel" means felt emotional pain, or a sense of realization. I focus on the pain, the only thing that's real. Drugs blur reality, strong verbs. "The needle tears a hole the old familiar sting." He's a regular user (addict), the needle has its own sole. "Try to kill it all away but i remember everthi" The poet uses personification, drugs are huge factors in the poet's life. "What have i become my sweets friend." The poets addiction has spiraled out of control, also shame and regret. "Everyone I know goes away in the end. people have left because of destructive behavior." And you could have it all my empire of dirt. Not fighting recognises he's made the mistake of doing drugs. The poet uses a oxymoron, and A metaphor. "I will let you down i will make you hurt." There's hopelessness creeping in, drugs have taken control of his conscience

"I wear this crown of thorns upon my liars chair."
The poet contradicts himself, he mocks the situation
paining surrounding family/friend. "full of broken thoughts
I cannot repair." The poet can't go back into the pas
"Beneath the stains of time the feelings disappear."
The poet uses a metaphor, and personification, "stains can't
come out." "You are someone else i am still right here."
The poet can't move on (no growth). The next para
graph repeats the 2nd paragraph this could mean
these words are significant. "If i could start
again a million miles away." The poet uses alliteration
The poet would go back if he could. I would keep
myself i would find a way." The poet uses repetition
If he could start again he would have to try to
stop drugs from taking him over again.

Focus on:

- quote incorporation
- further exploring the impact of Figures of Speech