

Critical Article Reflection Directions

1. Search in the literature database to find an article/critical essay about the poem. Use the Gale Literature Resource Center database (link on Madison library webpage) or a literature database using U of Memphis library. Links to library webpages are on the class website under "Library Links." You will need your U of M credentials to access those resources; for the Gale Literature Resource Center through Madison's library, the password is "elvis." Of course, you may also use the books in our library to find a scholarly article. You may also use the books in our library to find an article. There are several books about Whitman and his poetry in the 811 section.
2. Once you have selected an article, determine what the author is arguing; that is, identify the author's thesis. The thesis will probably be stated directly in the article, although it may be implied. Consider why the author may have felt the need to argue this particular point; for example, are they presenting an unusual interpretation or one that contradicts other interpretations? Are they focusing on a specific aspect that may otherwise go unnoticed? Etc. Also, you will want to identify the main ideas in the article; you can usually find these in the topic sentences of the article's paragraphs. I would suggest "annotating" the article as you read—printing the article and then underlining, marking, making notes, etc. on the article itself. If you don't wish to print the article, you may take thorough notes of the article as you read. If you come across words or concepts that are unfamiliar to you, look them up so you can understand the article more fully. As you read, think about how your own understanding of the poem develops as a result of reading the article. Are there new insights you had not previously understood or considered? Does the author present an interpretation that aligns with your own or do they interpret the poem in a different manner? Etc.
3. Once you have spent time reading and annotating the poem and then reading and annotating the article, you are ready to begin your reflection. In the first paragraph of your critical article reflection, be sure to identify the title of the article, its author, and the subject of the article (e.g., In the article "Ephraim Cabot: O'Neill's Spontaneous Poet," Cate discusses Eugene O'Neill's play *Desire Under the Elms*.) The introduction can also provide the general context of the poem itself.
4. Next, in the first body paragraph, summarize the article--explain what the article says overall in your own words. If you have read and annotated the article and you understand what it is saying, you might try to write your summary without actually looking at the article. From your memory, what was the article about? By not looking at the article as you summarize, you are less likely to plagiarize. After a short summary paragraph of the article's main points, you should move into your response/thoughts about the article in the following body paragraphs.

5. Each body paragraph should have a topic sentence that identifies its focus. You should select various points from the article that you could respond to or expand on; these points of focus form the topic sentences of your paragraph and then the body of the paragraph is your response. What do you think is the author's strongest point? What is something you understand more fully now that you did not notice or understand before you read the article? Does the article include positives and negatives (i.e., does the author discuss aspects of the poem that he/she sees as a strength and aspects of the poem that he/she criticizes or sees as a weakness or drawback)? Why does the author feel this way? Are there any points that you would disagree with and why? There are other points you can consider. These are just a few questions that may help you discover points to discuss.
6. Conclude with your final thoughts about the poem and your scholar's essay. Now that you have written the reflection, bring the reflection to a unified conclusion that reiterates the key ideas the reader should understand.
7. Your article reflection should be formatted according to MLA guidelines. You should have an MLA heading on page 1, headers, a Works Cited page, and internal citations as necessary. Double space. You can find the MLA citation by using the citation tools in the database (or it usually can be found at the bottom of the article). When you're in the article in the database, you'll find a "Cite" or "Citation Tools" button on the right-hand side of the screen.
8. The article reflection should be 750 words (approximately 2.5 pages (plus your Works Cited page)).