

**Open Topic Documented Essay**  
**ENWR 106: College Writing II**  
**Instructor: Kim Bernhardt**

[Here is a sample open documented essay assignment. Below the assignment hand-out is a peer review worksheet and a worksheet to help students work with quotes effectively.]

**Paper #5 due dates**

3 page rough draft due Friday, April 21<sup>st</sup> (bring two copies)

4 page rough draft due Friday, April 28<sup>th</sup> (bring two copies)

5-7 page final draft due Tuesday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1 page reflective essay also due May 9<sup>th</sup>

**\*\*NO LATE FINAL PAPERS OR REFLECTIVE ESSAYS WILL BE ACCEPTED\*\***

**Other due dates**

Revised paper due May 2<sup>nd</sup> (No late revised papers will be accepted)

**Details**

Documented essays must be between 5-7 pages (please see the Formatting Guide for details about setting up your paper)

You must use an appropriate academic documentation style, such as MLA (see Hacker)

All papers should include a bibliography or works cited page

I'd like to see what you can do with a subject you are interested in; to that end, for this assignment you should pick a poet you like and pick something about their work that you are interested in researching. You can pick any poet from our textbook (see me if you want to work on someone who is not included in our book). Even though this is a research paper you must have a main point or argument; your paper must explain how your research matters to your understanding of the poem.

**Assignment**

Write a 5-7 page research paper. This research paper should place the poem or poems you choose in context. In other words, you should research some aspect of the poem(s) and then write a paper explaining how this information helps you read and understand the poem(s).

**Here are some suggestions:**

1. Research information about the poet's life and explain how knowing this information affects your understanding of his or her poetry.
2. Research war or political events as they impact the poem(s). These might include the Holocaust, Japanese Internment camps, Native American relocation, etc.
3. Prejudice, stereotypes, or racism: If you choose to work on prejudice, stereotypes, or racism, you'll need to figure out the location and time period in which the poem is set. Once you've done that, you could research racism in the time/place of the poem.
4. Select a poem containing unfamiliar references such as Shelley's "Ozymandias" or Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Research the references and explain how the information you find changes the way that you understand the poem.

5. Here is one final example of a research topic on the historical context of a poem (this is from the English 106 website): Using William Blake's poem, "The Chimney Sweeper," research the historical context of the poem; for example, you might look up the abuse of the young "climbing boys" who worked in the chimneys or the efforts made to reform child labor laws in England around the time period of the poem.

### Sources

Once you've selected your topic, you'll need to spend some time at the library looking for information. As part of the work of this essay, you will learn how to find and evaluate a variety of source materials and integrate quotations and information from these materials into your essay. Thus it will be your job to evaluate your sources and decide what is a good or reliable source. In addition to any web-based sources, your essay should show evidence of the use of at least 3 non-web sources (books, journal articles, biographical or historical dictionaries). At least two of these must be sources other than our textbook.

Here is one possible way to structure this paper:

- I. Introduction (including the poet's name, poem title, a short summary of the poem you plan to discuss, and your main point or argument about how your research helps you understand the poem).
- II. Your research (approx. 2-3 pages)
- III. A discussion that shows how your research helps you understand the poem. This should include quotes and analysis (close reading) of the parts of the poem which connect to your research. (approx. 1-2 pages)
- IV. Conclusion

### Grading

This paper is worth 20% of your grade. Among other things, your papers will be evaluated on the following:

a. **Your thesis or argument**

b. **Your work with texts** (including the texts we've used in class and the sources you've found on your own): A key part of working with text involves textual responsibility. Being responsible to the text involves referencing, paraphrasing, and quoting material that relates to your project. Textual responsibility also means taking into account what an author has said. You will need to decide when to reference or paraphrase and when to quote. Some textual evidence provides students with examples; this evidence can often be paraphrased. Some textual evidence provides students with concepts or ideas; this evidence should usually be quoted.

c. **Organization:** You should explain and explore a central claim in each paragraph. The paper's paragraphs should connect logically to each other. In addition, the paragraphs should all work toward developing and supporting the paper's project.

d. **Presentation:** You should use correct grammar, clear diction and syntax, proper mechanics (like punctuation), and correct spelling (including the use of apostrophes).

Remember that using quotes is a very important part of an academic essay. As with the other papers you've written for this class, each time you use a quote from the poem you should do the following:

- a. introduce the quote
- b. quote the text (include page numbers)
- c. explain why the quote is important to your paragraph (this should be at least as long as the quote)
- d. connect this quote and the paragraph to the main point of your paper

Each of these steps is essential to making sure that your reader understands your point.

Finally, remember that any personal examples must be kept short (2-3 sentences max).

Good luck! Show me what you've learned!