



Students often think that creating art and analyzing art are entirely different and mutually exclusive processes.

When contemplating art, however, identifying with the process of the artist can produce deep analytical insights. For example, writing poems that emulate the work of a poet you are studying provides one of the best ways to develop the creative empathy that will enhance your critical understanding.

In other words, you can derive a richer understanding of art by interweaving your critical and creative responses to it. Put most simply, write a poem to understand another poem!

The Assignment:

Craft a poem that emulates the form of the Walt Whitman poem you have been assigned. The content and subject of YOUR poem, of course, are up to YOU! Write your poem about a topic that interests you!

A. In early drafts, do your best to follow your sample poem as a template. For example, where the Walt Whitman poem presents anaphora, present anaphora; where the Walt Whitman poem offers an image, offer an image; where the Walt Whitman poem provides a synecdoche, provide a synecdoche; where the Walt Whitman poem employs an em-dash, employ an em-dash; where the Walt Whitman poem controls rhythm through caesurae and extended line length, control rhythm through caesurae and extended line length; where the Walt Whitman poem offers an onomatopoeia, offer an onomatopoeia, and so on. Your careful attention to the form of the Walt Whitman poem should allow a savvy Whitman scholar to recognize the source poem within your own emulation.

B. After carefully mimicking the form of the Walt Whitman poem, revise your own poem to smooth it out a little, but not so broadly as to erase the Whitman influence. In other words, your poem should clearly reveal its debt to Walt to any knowledgeable audience.

If your poem was a very long Whitman poem, you may craft a Whitmanesque poem modeled on a fragment of the longer Walt Whitman poem, but your poem must include a minimum of 16 Whitmanesque lines.

Poetry Workshops

At the deadline, you must arrive at class with an electronic copy of your new poem. We'll divide the sections into smaller groups. You'll forward a copy of your poem to the members of your group, read your poem to them, elicit quick critical feedback, make alterations, and craft a final draft of your poem.

At the end of the workshop, you'll print one hard copy of your poem. You will also send your poem to your instructor as an MSWord file attached to an e-mail message. Use the Subject line: <your name> Walt Whitman Emulation. Your instructor will act as your agent in forwarding one copy to the editors of *Papyrus*. The hard copy, along with comments, will wend its way back to you.