

## Prewriting: Response to Poetry Writing Prompts

Choose your own work for your response, or use one of the following prompts.

### WORKPLACE

You are working on posters for a job fair and would like to include some inspirational quotations. Search a poetry collection for lines from a poem that might help motivate a person your age who is looking for a job or thinking about career paths. When you have identified an appropriate selection from a poem, explain its meaning. Ask your language arts teacher if you have correctly interpreted the selection.

### SCHOOL

Most schools use cheers to build school spirit and show support for sports teams and other groups. Cheers are often poems of a sort, containing rhyme, imagery, and other poetic elements. For your school newspaper, analyze one of your school's cheers.

### MUSIC

Many folk songs are poems set to music. At the library, on the Internet, or with the help of a music teacher, find a folk song that interests you. Copy the words of the song on a sheet of paper. Then, write an analysis of the song's meaning and share it with your classmates.

### SOCIAL STUDIES

Poems reveal a great deal about people's lives and times. Search poetry collections in the library or on the Internet for poems about other places and times. Choose a poem that appeals to you. Then, write about what the poem means to you. Include any insights it gives you into a different place and time.

### MATHEMATICS

Haiku is a form of poetry that follows specific rules for number of syllables and lines. Research the rules that govern haiku. Then, select a haiku, and write a paragraph explaining how the form of the poem contributes to its meaning. Share your ideas with others in your class.

## Prewriting: Choose and Analyze a Poem

Use the chart below to help you analyze a poem.

- Choose a poem, read it aloud, and write down your first thoughts about it on a separate piece of paper.
- Answer the questions in the chart to examine the elements of the poem.

**Poem title and author:** \_\_\_\_\_

ELEMENT	ANALYSIS
<b>Title:</b> What does the title reveal about the subject, or theme, of the poem?	
<b>Rhyme Scheme / Rhythm:</b> What is the poem's rhyme scheme and meter? How do the rhythm and rhyme contribute to the poem's tone?	
<b>Speaker:</b> Who is the speaker in the poem? What does the speaker's point of view have to do with what is happening in the poem?	
<b>Tone:</b> What is the poet's attitude toward the subject of the poem? How does the poet's word choice, or diction, reveal the tone?	
<b>Figurative Language:</b> How does the poet's use of figurative language complement the meaning of the poem?	
<b>Theme:</b> What is the poet observing about life through the poem's theme?	

## Prewriting: Thesis and Support

Use the chart below to write your thesis statement and gather and elaborate on your supporting evidence. Use additional paper if necessary.

<b>Thesis statement:</b>		
<b>Supporting evidence:</b>		
<b>Literary element:</b>	<b>Detail or quotation:</b>	<b>Elaboration:</b>
<b>Literary element:</b>	<b>Detail or quotation:</b>	<b>Elaboration:</b>
<b>Literary element:</b>	<b>Detail or quotation:</b>	<b>Elaboration:</b>

## Drafting: Organizing and Writing Your Response

Complete the graphic organizer below, and use it to help you write your first draft. Use additional paper if necessary.

### INTRODUCTION

How will you grab the reader's attention?
What is the title of the poem, who is the author, and what background information will you provide?
What is your thesis?

### BODY

Key point 1:	Key point 2:	Key point 3:
Support from poem:	Support from poem:	Support from poem:
Elaboration:	Elaboration:	Elaboration:

### CONCLUSION

How will you restate your thesis?
With what final thought will you leave your reader?

## Evaluating: Student Model Think Sheet

Answer the questions below to get a better understanding of the structure of a poetry analysis. Use additional paper if necessary.

- Re-read “Sea Fever.” The notes in the margin will help you identify important elements of a poetry analysis.
- As you respond to the questions, think about the use of language, the organization of information, and the strategies used for developing ideas and elaborating on them.

### QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

1. What is the title of the poem being analyzed, and who is the author?

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2. What is the student’s thesis?

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3. What poetic elements does the student discuss?

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4. Who is the speaker in the poem? How does the speaker relate to the identified theme?

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5. What evidence is given in support of the thesis?

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6. How does the conclusion reinforce the theme and leave the reader with a final thought?

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## Evaluating: Responses to Poetry

Use the following questions to evaluate your response to poetry or that of one of your classmates.

- Make brief notes to answer the questions.
- Rate the parts of the analysis. The lowest score is **1**, and the highest is **4**.
- Make at least three suggestions for improving the analysis.

1. Does the introduction include the poem's title, author, and any background information?

**Rating:** 1 2 3 4

**Suggestion:** \_\_\_\_\_

2. Does the introduction include a clear thesis statement? Does it connect literary elements and the poem's theme?

**Rating:** 1 2 3 4

**Suggestion:** \_\_\_\_\_

3. Is the speaker in the poem identified? Does the speaker relate to the theme?

**Rating:** 1 2 3 4

**Suggestion:** \_\_\_\_\_

4. Are enough references to the poem included for each key point? Are the references elaborated upon?

**Rating:** 1 2 3 4

**Suggestion:** \_\_\_\_\_

5. How does the conclusion remind readers of the thesis statement and summarize the key points? Does it leave the reader with a final thought?

**Rating:** 1 2 3 4

**Suggestion:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Revising: Improve Your Response to Poetry

Use the rubric in this chart to help you improve your response.

Questions	Do This	Changes You Made
1. Does the introduction mention the poem's title, author, and background information?	_____ <b>Circle</b> the poet, title, and any background information about them.	
2. Does it include a clear thesis statement that names the key elements and the poem's theme?	_____ <b>Put a box</b> around the thesis statement. _____ <b>Put a check mark</b> next to the key elements and theme in the thesis statement.	
3. Does each body paragraph discuss a key point that supports the thesis?	_____ <b>Bracket</b> the key points in each body paragraph.	
4. Is each key point supported with references to the poem? Is each reference elaborated?	_____ <b>Highlight</b> quotations or restated details from the poem. _____ <b>Draw an arrow</b> to their elaborations.	
5. Is the poem's speaker identified?	_____ <b>Put parentheses</b> around references to the poem's speaker.	
6. Does the conclusion effectively remind readers of the thesis and summarize the key points? Does it leave the reader with a final thought?	_____ <b>Underline</b> the sentence in the conclusion that restates the thesis. _____ <b>Put a star</b> beside the sentences that summarize the key points, and <b>put two stars</b> by the final thought.	

## Proofreading Checklist

<b>GUIDELINES FOR PROOFREADING</b>			
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Needs Work</b>
Is every sentence complete, not a fragment or a run-on?			
Are punctuation marks—such as end marks, commas, semicolons, colons, dashes, and quotation marks—used correctly?			
Are proper nouns, proper adjectives, and the first words of sentences capitalized?			
Does every verb agree in number with its subject?			
Are verbs and tenses used correctly?			
Are subject and object forms of personal pronouns used correctly?			
Does every pronoun agree with its antecedent in number and in gender? Are pronoun references clear?			
Are frequently confused words (such as <i>fewer</i> and <i>less</i> , <i>affect</i> and <i>effect</i> ) used correctly?			
Are all words spelled correctly? Are the plural forms of words correct?			
Is the paper neat and correct in form?			



## Framework for Responses to Poetry

Use the following framework to help you evaluate your own writing and the models on the following pages.

- Demonstrates understanding of the **significance** of the poem
- Provides necessary **background information**
- Supports ideas and viewpoints with **accurate references** to the poem
- Identifies and analyzes **stylistic devices**
- Identifies and assesses impact of **complexities**

## Response to Poetry: Score Point 4

Read the student model below. With the Framework as a guide, write an evaluation of the model in the commentary box, explaining why the model received the score shown above.

Model	Commentary
<p>Julia Alvarez’s poems read like “memoirs in verse,” as one editor called them. Born in New York, but raised in the Dominican Republic, Alvarez writes from her experiences. “Exile” sharply describes the thoughts and feelings of a young Alvarez as her family flees the dictatorship of the Dominican Republic and returns to the United States.</p>	
<p>In real life, Alvarez’s father became involved with the Dominican underground, fighting against the tyrannical government to gain political freedom. On August 6, 1960, Alvarez and her family fled the Dominican Republic for New York City. At the age of 10, Julia Alvarez was unaware of the problems that faced her homeland, and uncertain of starting life anew in a foreign country.</p>	
<p>The poem “Exile” reaches into the past through the eyes of a child. Julia speaks to her father rather than the reader. It gives a feeling of eavesdropping on a personal conversation between father and daughter. Alvarez’s words are honest and direct, though not accusing. She begins, “The night we fled the country, Papi, you told me we were going to the beach, ...while posted at the window, you looked out.” These lines draw the reader into the Alvarez household, seeing a family hurriedly preparing to leave their home, a father watching cautiously out the window, and a daughter noticing everything. Alvarez describes her dawning understanding as her family leaves their home. She writes about her father’s conversations in “hurried whispers,” her uncles’ “phony chuckles,” and her mother’s red eyes, which belied her explanation.</p>	
<p>Taking her father’s promises of the beach to another level, Alvarez uses the metaphor of swimming in deep water to describe her feelings throughout the rest of the poem. She feels herself “floating out, past the driveway, past the gates.” Without any control over her circumstances, Alvarez lets herself be taken to the safety of a new country.</p>	
<p>The image of swimming continues to the end of the poem when, “dressed all too formally with all due respect as visitors to this country,” Julia and her father view a display in the window of Macy’s. Their foreign faces are superimposed on the faces of the mannequins in the display, looking down, “eager, afraid, not yet sure of the outcome,” as they plunge into a new life in a new country.</p>	

## Response to Poetry: Score Point 3

Read the student model below. With the Framework as a guide, write an evaluation of the model in the commentary box, explaining why the model received the score shown above.

Model	Commentary
<p>One editor called Julia Alvarez’s poems memoirs in verse. Alvarez was born in New York, but raised in the Dominican Republic. She writes from her experiences. Alvarez describes her thoughts and feelings in her poem “Exile.” In the poem her family flees the dictatorship of the Dominican Republic and returns to the United States</p>	
<p>In real life, Alvarez’s father became involved with the Dominican underground. The group was fighting against the abusive government to gain freedom. In 1960, Alvarez and her family fled the Dominican Republic. Julia was only 10 years old and didn’t know about the problems that faced her country. She was worried about starting a new life in a foreign country.</p>	
<p>“Exile” reaches into the past through the eyes of Julia when she’s a child. Julia speaks to her father instead of the reader. This gives the reader a feeling of spying on a personal conversation. Alvarez begins by telling about the night her family left the country. Her father had told her they were going to the beach. The first lines of the poem draw the reader into the Alvarez household. The reader sees a family getting ready to leave their home, a father watching out the window, and a daughter noticing everything. Alvarez describes how she figured out what was going on as her family leaves their home. She writes about her father’s conversations in “whispers” and her mother’s red eyes.</p>	
<p>Alvarez uses the metaphor of swimming to describe her feelings for the rest of the poem. She feels herself floating away from home. She doesn’t have any control over anything. She lets herself be taken to the safety of a new country.</p>	
<p>The image of swimming continues to the end. Julia and her father are dressed up to show respect and looking at a display in the window of Macy’s. They are looking down, “not yet sure of the outcome,” as they jump headfirst into a new life.</p>	

## Response to Poetry: Score Point 2

Read the student model below. With the Framework as a guide, write an evaluation of the model in the commentary box, explaining why the model received the score shown above.

Model	Commentary
<p>Julia Alvarez wrote a poem called <u>Exile</u>. The poem is about Julia’s experience as her family left the Dominican republic. She uses comparison in the poem. The comparison is that Julia is swimming, but really she’s riding in a car. I think she said she was swimming because she was just being carried away like a wave would carry you away in the ocean.</p>	
<p>Julia’s dad was involved with the underground. The Dominican republic government didn’t let people have their freedom. So her dad and others fought to get political freedom. But the government was very dangerous and many people were put in jail or murdered or both. After this kept going on, Julia Alvarez and her family fled the country.</p>	
<p>In the poem, Julia tells her Papi that he lied to her. She seems angry that she didn’t get to go to the beach like he said. Instead, her family went to the airport and slept. Then they took a plane to the United States. When they were getting on the plane, Julia’s father looked out like he left something in the water and it floated away.</p>	
<p>When Julia and her dad were in New York, they dressed up. They were only visiting, so they wanted to look nice. They went to Macy’s which is The World’s Largest Department Store. They didn’t buy anything, they just looked at the window displays. There was a display that showed a father and a daughter going swimming and it made Julia think about how her dad had told her they were going to the beach. That’s what inspired her to write this poem. She thought the swimmers in the display looked like her and her dad at the beach, but not really like them at all.</p>	
<p>Julia felt lucky to be in America. After her and her family went to America, the leaders of the underground were murdered. They were three sisters. Alvarez did not put that in the poem, though.</p>	

## Practice with Conventions

Circle the letter of the best answer to each of the following items.  
(40 points; 4 points each)

### 1. Read this sentence.

In the 1960s, confessional poets were to change the face of modern poetry, making it more human.

How should the underlined part of this sentence be written?

- A) changed the face of modern poetry, making
- B) had changed the face of modern poetry, to be making
- C) to change the face of modern poetry, to make
- D) Leave as is.

### 2. Read this sentence.

Your reading list this semester includes: titles by Faulkner, Fitzgerald, Woolf, and Cather.

- A) semester: includes titles by
- B) semester includes titles by
- C) semester includes titles by:
- D) Leave as is.

### 3. Which of the following sentences is written correctly?

- A) Not only the Brownings are known for their love poems but for their great love for each other.
- B) The Brownings are known not only for their love poems but for their great love for each other.
- C) The Brownings are known for their love poems not only but for their great love for each other.

- D) The Brownings are known not for their love poems only but for their great love for each other.

### 4. Read this sentence.

Kim came to enjoy poetry such as the sonnets of John Donne, Walt Whitman's free verse, and John Keats's odes.

- A) John Donne's sonnets, the free verse of Walt Whitman, and John Keats's odes
- B) John Donne's sonnets, Walt Whitman's free verse, and John Keats's odes
- C) the sonnets of John Donne, Walt Whitman's free verse, and the odes of John Keats.
- D) Leave as is.

### 5. Which of the following sentences is best written?

- A) To have read Cather's *My Antonia*, which made me cry my eyes out, I decided to take up her *O Pioneers!*
- B) Having read Cather's *My Antonia*, which made me cry my eyes out, I decided taking up her *O Pioneers!*
- C) Having read Cather's *My Antonia*, which made me cry my eyes out, I decided to take up her *O Pioneers!*
- D) Having read Cather's *My Antonia* made me cry my eyes out, I decided to take up her *O Pioneers!*

**6. Which of the following sentences is BEST written?**

- A) Robert spent much time in his library, the source of his education, which held books in several languages.
- B) Robert spent much time in his library, the source of his education, which held books in several languages.
- C) The source of Robert's education was his library, which held books in several languages.
- D) Robert spent much time in his library of books in several languages, the source of his education.

**7. Which of the following sentences is phrased appropriately?**

- A) Before bed, he drank tea, brushed his teeth, and washes his face.
- B) Before bed, he drank tea, brushes his teeth, and washed his face.
- C) Before bed, he drinks tea, brushes his teeth, and washes his face.
- D) Before bed, he drinks tea, brushed his teeth, and washed his face.

**8. Read this sentence.**

To learn most about Sylvia Plath,  
our class watched a video from the PBS series *Voices and Visions*.

**How should the underlined part of the sentence be written?**

- A) To learn more about Sylvia Plath, our class watched
- B) Learning most about Sylvia Plath, our class watching
- C) To learn more about Sylvia Plath, our class to watch
- D) Leave as is.

**9. Read these lines from Alan Dugan's poem "Winter: For an Untenable Situation."**

...Oh let  
the white refrigerator car  
of day go by in glacial thunder

**Which sentence quotes from these lines correctly?**

- A) Dugan uses metaphors in the poem, comparing the day to a "refrigerator" car and to a "glacier."
- B) Dugan's plea, taking on an edge of lamentation with the "Oh," seems to be an excuse for inaction; he wants the day simply to go by like a white...car.
- C) Dugan writes, "...white refrigerator car / of day..." and provides the reader with a vivid illustration.
- D) Dugan's use of white and glacial emphasize the cold and wintry "day," which he dramatically hopes will simply "go by."

**10. Read this sentence.**

If Sylvia Plath had not got so angry  
at her husband, she might not of  
written the great poems of *Ariel*.

**How should the underlined part of this sentence be written?**

- A) had not gotten so angry at her husband, she might not have written
- B) had not got so angry at her husband, she might not have written
- C) had not gotten so angry at her husband, she might not of written
- D) Leave as is.