

Constructive Commentary in 2 modalities:

A. Synchronous (in class)

B. Asynchronous (online)

A. Synchronous in-person (in class)

In-class Group Constructive Commentary

For this **in-class assignment**, work in groups of 3 or 4 students. Make sure the group members have access to everyone's docs.

Take it in turn to present:

1. Your latest poem draft
2. The process of writing this poem: significant choices or changes you made
3. Your analysis of this poem: significant imagery and literary device(s)

Get feedback on a few key points:

1. Content & impact of language (imagery, diction choices, significant literary devices)
2. Punctuation and grammar: does anything need to be adjusted, corrected, added?
3. Possible titles for the poem.

Aim to give each group member 10 minutes. In that time, you can refer to their Google doc, ask questions, offer suggestions, etc.

- Keep note of interesting or helpful suggestions from your group **in your own Google doc**;
 - Describe what was most helpful and include questions or concerns you still have.
 - Add this as text at the end of your Google doc OR as comment boxes in your text.
- As a group, hand in a **brief** summary to me at the end of class (see table below).

Keep in mind these **general principles** for your comments to one another:

1. **Be positive**: explain what is **striking or interesting** about a line, phrase, poem, or idea.
2. **Be specific** in your comments and suggestions:
 - Make your comments about **devices, techniques, lines or phrases** rather than generalities like 'that was great!'.
 - Suggestions like 'add more devices' are *not* helpful, but 'you might repeat this line again for effect' or 'here are some words with striking visual imagery' are more productive statements.
3. When you comment on something **confusing, unclear, or less effective**, it helps to present it as a question ('could you explain...?') and not an attack ('this makes no sense!').

| Name | comments/suggestions |
|------|----------------------|
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| | |

B. Asynchronous online

Constructive commentary

Constructive comments have two main functions:

1. To help your classmates edit and workshop their poems
 - Your comments provide ideas, feedback, and suggestions to the writer of the poem, *but* the poet is free to choose to follow (or not!) the suggestions in the comments.
2. To communicate appropriately with the terminology and structures of poetry
 - correct identification of devices and poetic structures
 - correct literary terminology
 - appropriate tone in all comments

How to write appropriate comments

- **Be specific:** make your comments about **key lines or phrases** rather than an entire poem.
- **Comment 'A': Be positive**
 - In your first comment, explain what is **striking or interesting** about a line or phrase.
 - Include correct terminology (ex: metaphor, enjambment, refrain, quatrain...)
- **Comment 'B': Be honest & helpful**
 - In a separate comment box for the same classmate, comment on something **confusing, unclear, or less effective**. This could also include identifying significant grammar errors like sentence fragments.
 - Include correct terminology (ex: metaphor, enjambment, quatrain...)
 - **Be helpful** by including a **specific suggestion for change** or elaboration.

Example:

There was a time when it would've been illegal
for my wife to be my wife. Her skin,
my household of privilege. Sometimes,
I wish I could move to another planet.
Sometimes, I wonder what worlds are out there.
I turn off the TV because the news rarely makes
the right decision on its own.

(Matthew Olzmann, Astronomers Locate a New Planet)

Example of Comment A: I like how these lines seem to personify the news in an ironic way. It makes the reader think about how news stories are often not really as objective as we might think
[note that this comment

- Identifies a specific striking passage in the poem; AND
- Explains WHY this passage is effective, with accurate terminology (personification, irony).]

Example of comment B: This is a sentence fragment. One way to correct it is to connect it to the previous sentence with 'because of' (but this is not great poetry language! It 'tells' too much!):

So another possibility is to end the previous sentence with a colon

There was a time when it would've been illegal
for my wife to be my wife: her skin,
my household of privilege.

[note that this comment is:

- specific, in this case about a grammatical problem; AND
- it provides a suggestion for an alternative]

Preparing to receive commentary

Your 'Creative Work' document will be shared with a small group of students in the class. Before this happens, here are a few suggestions:

- In ***your*** Google doc:
 - Look over your draft and make preliminary edits: readable font size, even spacing, basic corrections of spelling or punctuation.
- You will need to **give access** to the other members in your group when they request it.
- It might help to **ask your group a question** or point them in a direction; ex.: What variations could be made to the refrain line? Are there other rhymes that would be more effective? Or ask how you might elaborate on an analogy or add more imagery.

Assignment Instructions

Add constructive comments on **2 different students'** drafts in your group.

- For each of the two students, add 2 comment boxes (Comment A and Comment B).
- Aim to ensure that ALL students in your group get some feedback; if you see that 2 other students have already commented on a draft, choose another one for your comments.

Your comments are evaluated based on these criteria:

1. Comment A: You have made a **positive** comment on what is **striking or interesting** about a line or phrase. There is **correct terminology** and the comment is focused on **specific lines or phrases** rather than the entire poem.
2. Comment B: Separately but for the same poem, you have made an **honest** comment on something **confusing, unclear, or less effective** and you have also included a **helpful and specific suggestion** for a change or elaboration. There is **correct terminology** and the comment is focused on **specific lines or phrases** rather than the entire poem.

Suggestions: Focus for these comments can be on one (or more) of the following:

- **Form**: are there parts that you find especially effective? Do you have suggestions that might add impact?
- **Imagery**: Are there sharp, striking images? Does the poem 'show' more than 'tell'? What is the impact of the images (what do they evoke or bring to mind for you?)
- **Literary and rhetorical devices**: are these devices clear to you, as a reader? Are they interesting? Could the writer develop them further?