

## HARLEM RENAISSANCE POETRY ANALYSIS: The Steps

**DIRECTIONS:** Follow the steps below in order to build a deeper understanding of your selected poem. I expect you to take notes that are categorized under each step. I will collect these notes with your final draft. Your final draft and presentation should include your conclusions for each of these categories.

1. Read the poem aloud twice.
2. Do a brief, preliminary rhetorical analysis by identifying anything you can already discern at first reading about the:

Persona  
Audience  
Purpose  
Argument

3. Identify the **literal level of meaning** to the best of your ability.
  - a. Paraphrase aloud
  - b. Consider implication of title
4. Identify key examples of **diction**:
  - a. Look up any unfamiliar words.
  - b. Identify any ambiguous words or phrases.
  - c. Check for allusions (e.g. to mythology, history, etc.) and look them up if you do not know them.
  - d. Describe/categorize the diction for the poem as a whole.
5. Identify **syntactic patterns**:
  - a. Identify rhetorical devices (**schemes and tropes**), especially any you see used more than once or twice. Review our schemes and tropes handout or go here for help regarding schemes and tropes: <http://rhetoric.byu.edu/figures/Schemes%20and%20Tropes.htm>
  - b. Identify patterns of emphasis and repetition.
6. Consider **sound**:
  - a. Mark any examples of heavy use of alliteration (tends to create a harsh or cacophonous sound) and assonance (tends to create a pleasant or euphonious sound).
  - b. Is the sound of the language overall euphonious (soft, pleasant or flowing) or cacophonous (harsh or grating)? Or is there an alternation between the two?
  - c. Consider rhyme and repetition. Does the poem use regular rhyme? Is there a break in the rhyme scheme? If it shifts or changes, mark these places in the text.
  - d. Is the rhythm, or meter of the poem, consistent? If it shifts or changes, mark these places in the text.
  - e. Consider what effect shifts in sound, rhyme, and rhythm have on the overall meaning or tone.
7. Identify **imagery**:
  - a. Identify repeated and/or extended images. Consider what senses they engage.
  - b. Describe/categorize the imagery for the poem as a whole.

# HARLEM RENAISSANCE POETRY PROJECT

**STEP 1:** Select any poem that appeals to you from one of the following poets:

Langston Hughes

Claude McKay

Jean Toomer

Countee Cullen

Georgia Douglas Johnson

Zora Neale Hurston

Jessie Redmon Fauset

Gwendolyn Bennett

Here are two suggested sites for finding poems:

1. [www.poetryfoundation.org](http://www.poetryfoundation.org)
2. [www.poets.org](http://www.poets.org)

**STEP 2:** Get my approval on your poem. 1<sup>st</sup> come, 1<sup>st</sup> serve!

**STEP 3:** Do some research. You should follow the instructions and complete all of the sections on the back of this page.

**STEP 4:** Write a 1-2 page analysis essay about your poem, incorporating the information you found in Step 3. You must be specific – quote lines, explain rhetorical & poetic devices, etc. Overall, be sure that your essay answers these questions:

- a. What is the poem about?
- b. What is the speaker's message or argument?
- c. How does the speaker feel about the subject matter, and how do we know?  
(Diction creates tone.)
- d. What was it about this poem that originally appealed to you? How did your view of the poem change after this deeper analysis?

**STEP 5:** Hand in a copy of your selected poem to me a day before your presentation.

**STEP 6:** On \_\_\_\_\_, you will read your selected poem to the class and then orally present a summarized version of your analysis paper.

## **GRADING CRITERIA:**

1. In-class work ethic – Are you using class time efficiently? Are you on-task while in the computer lab? (10 points)
2. Poetry reading – Did you effectively read your poem with proper voice & tone? (5 points)
3. Oral presentation – Do you explain the significance of the poem and answer the required questions? (10 points)
4. Analysis essay & Notes – Is your final essay in MLA format? Are all questions answered using specific examples and support? Did you hand in your notes? (25 points)