# **EXPANDING THE CANON Essay and Presentation**

LASA Senior English

Throughout much of your education, you've studied well-known texts from the Western Canon--a body of work important to Western (European-influenced) culture. If we've presented these works to you, we think they're valuable--both in themselves and because they inform and explain the modern American world that we live in. They are not, however, the end-all and be-all. For this unit you will pick a poem written after 1900--in other words, modern--by someone who is not cisgender, heterosexual, Christian, or white.

1. With a partner, find a poem that fulfills the criteria above. It must have **at least 12** lines and include some aural/sound devices (see “Types of Rhyme” list below) **and** metaphorical techniques (like **apostrophe, hyperbole, metaphor, metonymy, personification, chremamorphism, zoomorphism, simile or synecdoche)**.

2. There are many good sources--including poetryfoundation.org, literature anthologies in the classroom, and a suggested poet list below--so long as the poet is not typically considered part of the Western Canon. **The poet should be published and the poem must be approved by me.**

3. Take time to discuss and mark your poem for tone, theme, and the sound and metaphorical devices required for the project. Create a PowerPoint in which you electronically annotate the poem for aural devices (see “Types of Rhyme” list below) and metaphorical devices (see #1) that help develop tone and theme. Through this process, your presentation should reveal the theme/meaning of the poem, as well.

4. Write a 3-page essay (double-spaced, Times New Roman size 12, one essay per student pair – 4 pages is hard limit) that analyzes the impact **sound** and **figurative** devices have on meaning in the poem. Be sure to have a specific, unified thesis and distinct topics. Each student should focus on one element/topic, but you both need to agree on the theme and thesis. Use MLA style parenthetical citation for your quotes. The typed hard copy is due with turnitin.com paper ID (only one student should submit to Blend/turnitin.com) on

March 9(A)/10(B) with cover sheet, final draft, two edited drafts and hard copy of the poem attached. **Points will be taken off for MLA citation errors. This essay counts as a major grade.**

5. Also on March 9(A)/10(B), be ready to project your PowerPoint of the heavily annotated poem (introduced with a short, one-paragraph biography and poem context) to the class and present it (see “Persimmons” sample on Blend). After a dramatic poem reading, you will explain how literary techniques (primarily **sound** and **metaphor**) help develop the meaning you found in the poem. You have 5-7 minutes for this presentation. The electronic, annotated poem (PPT) and presentation counts as a double daily grade.

## **Types of Rhyme**

Alliteration – Repetition of initial consonants in adjacent words

*Example: …this vichyssoise of verbiage veers most verbose…*

Assonance – Repetition of similar vowel sounds

*Example: …when I get shocked at the hospital by the doctor when I'm not cooperating while he's operating…*

Consonance – Repetition of similar consonant sounds

*Example: And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each curtain…*

Onomatopoeia – Words or phrases whose sounds correspond to their meanings

*Example: The Alka-Seltzer jingle: Plop, plop, fizz, fizz, oh, what a relief it is!* [When something “plops” or “fizzes” it actually sounds like the word describing the action.]

End Rhyme – Repetition of sounds in the final syllable or syllables of verses

*End-rhymes may be subdivided further:*

*Perfect rhyme: a rhyme between words that are identical in sound from the point of their first accented syllable forward.*

*Example: sight, flight; deign and gain and obtain*

*Imperfect rhyme: a rhyme between a stressed and an unstressed syllable.*

*Example: den, siren*

*Semirhyme: a rhyme with an extra syllable on one word.*

*Example: bend, ending*

*Oblique (or Slant) rhyme: a rhyme with an imperfect match in sound.*

*Example: green, fiend*

Suggested Poet List  
I must approve your choice of poem. You are welcome to choose a poet who is not on any of these lists, though you should consider whether your particular poem has enough by way of sound devices and metaphor to write an entire essay about these things.

Sherman Alexie Gloria Anzaldúa

James Baldwin Amiri Baraka

Jorge Luis Borges Gwendolyn Brooks

Countee Cullen Kamala Das

Rita Dove Nissim Ezekiel

Alan Ginsberg Louise Gluck

Joy Harjo Robert Hayden

Juan Felipe Herrera bell hooks

Langston Hughes Stanley Kunitz

Yusef Komunyakaa Philip Levine

Li-Young Lee Jamaal May

Claude McKay Samuel Menashe

N. Scott Momaday Howard Nemerov

Pablo Neruda Robert Pinsky

Muriel Rukeyser Warsan Shire

Leslie Marmon Silko Tracy K. Smith

Natasha Trethewey Derek Walcott

Orlando White

The following links are also on Blend for easier access:

ASIAN-AMERICAN VOICES IN POETRY

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/101589/asian-american-voices-in-poetry>

NATIVE AMERICAN POETRY

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/144560/native-american-poetry-and-culture>

QUEER BLACK POETS...

<https://lithub.com/queer-black-poets-since-the-harlem-renaissance-a-reading-list/>

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH (Poets)

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/101640/celebrating-black-history-month>

LATINX VOICES IN POETRY

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/144542/us-latinx-voices-in-poetry>

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH (Poets)

<https://poets.org/hispanic-heritage-month>

HISPANIC WRITERS

<https://www.loc.gov/poetry/hispanic-writers/>

LGBTQ POETRY

<https://poets.org/lgbtq-poetry>