Famousi Poets Assignment

*Use Format #3. Choose a famous poem, and two other fairly similar poems by two other poets. Be sure to make an original title for your writeup and for each of the sections.[[1]](#footnote-2) Poems get quotation marks around their titles, rather than italics. Follow* The Stop! Sheet *fully. The numbered sections outlined on this sheet are to help you make sure you’re talking about everything you should be. Do not number anything on your finished piece, and do not “answer” the numbered topics (e.g. do not write “Yes, Poe was famous.” or “No, Emily Dickenson didn’t really write about real world things”). When you are done, your written piece should sound like you wrote it yourself, without needing this sheet at all.*

First Section: Your Poem Choices (difficulty: easy)

Without saying “I,” say that there are three poems which are in many ways quite similar. Maybe they’re all about a ship sinking. Write a couple of sentences for each of the three poems, comparing them one to the other. What makes them quite similar? What makes them a bit different? But they’re mostly similar, right?

Second Section: The Poets (difficulty: medium)

This section will have three subsections, one for each poet. Tell the basics of:

1. what kind of person each poet was,
2. what kind of life s/he had,
3. how famous s/he got, in life, and after,
4. what his/her most famous works were called,
5. how much poetry s/he did,
6. what kinds of publications s/he got published in,
7. any awards or honours s/he may have gotten for poetry, and what else s/he may have done besides poetry, if anything.
8. Did s/he get fame in his/her lifetime, or only afterward?
9. Look for connections between the poet’s background or life (or culture, gender, time period and country), and what the poem specifically addresses. *Include pictures, of the poet, and/or any illustrations or fancy printed versions of the poem, or the cover art of the book in which it is found.*



Third Section: How Each Poem Is Put Together (difficulty: hardest)

In three subsections, tell what each poet has done, the choices s/he has made to create this poem. Use the poets’ last names a lot. Quote three times from each poem. *There is no reason to list things the poet has not done (so, if the poem doesn’t rhyme, or doesn’t have similes or metaphors, there is no reason to say that).* *But talk about every single one of the following things which the poem does:*

1. Has the poet used short, choppy, rhythmic lines, or long, flowing, lyrical ones?
2. Is there a recurring line in the poem?
3. Is the poem divided into short stanzas or verses?
4. Is the poem a sonnet, cinquain or other identifiable poetry form? If so, what is a sonnet anyway?
5. Does how the poem is written down on the page matter? Is it a certain shape?
6. Has the poet done anything interesting with capitals or punctuation?
7. Does the poet use a lot of (for example) floral imagery? If someone writes an entire poem about a flower, pointing out that she uses floral imagery is pretty pointless. But, if a poem about a WWII battle contains a bunch of floral imagery (“And blossoms of blood bloomed on the uniform blouses of the battalion/scattering crimson petals to Kingdom Come and gone”) this is interesting.
8. Does the poet refer to/allude to identifiable people, places, events, situations or things (real or created by someone else) that exist outside the poem itself?
9. Is there an identifiable rhythm to the poem? (Does Wikipedia inform you the poem is written in trochaic heptameter octuplets?) If so, point this out.
10. Is the poem a story? Does it have characters?
11. Is the narrator supposed to be the poet him/herself, or a character? If so, what kind of character?
12. If the narrator is the poet, what kind of person does the poet present him/herself as, and how does s/he come across?
13. Is there visual art that is meant to go with the poem?

Fourth Section: Winning Poet (difficulty: easy)

Referring to as many of the things you’ve previously mentioned as possible, make a compelling case for the idea that one of your three poets is a superior (or more successful) poet to the other two. Don’t say “I” or “my.”

Some Poets to choose from:

*Choose any famous poets, really. Not you, and not a friend of yours. That would be cheating.*

* T. S. Elliot (trippy stuff)
* e. e. cummings (odd, beautiful stuff with no capitals)
* Maya Angelou (modern stuff)
* Ezra Pound
* Dylan Thomas
* W. H. Auden
* Sylvia Plath (perhaps a bit depressed stuff)
* Emily Dickinson (also perhaps a bit depressed stuff)
* Allen Ginsberg (crazy beatnik/hippie non-rhyming stuff)
* Robert Frost (pretty stuff everyone likes)
* Langston Hughes
* Robert Service (rustic, funny stuff)
* Leonard Cohen (cynical and sometimes sexual stuff, Canadian, wrote “Hallelujah”)
* Walt Whitman
* George Gordon (Lord) Byron (dark, romantic stuff)
* William Blake (frequently dark, crazy stuff)
* Shel Silverstein (quirky, funny stuff)
* William Shakespeare (flowery, formal stuff)
* Robert Burns (Scottish stuff)
* William Wordsworth
* John Keats
* William Butler Yeats
* Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
* Alfred (Lord) Tennyson
* Robert Browning
* Elizabeth Barrett Browning
* Rudyard Kipling
* Archibald Lampman
* Pauline Johnson
* Bliss Carman
* Alfred Noyes
* Samuel Taylor Coleridge (drug-addled stuff)
* Percy Bysshe Shelley (Mary’s husband)
* Irving Layton
* Something from the Bible (do a Psalm, a Proverb, a ‘chapter’ of the very sexual Song of Solomon, or a ‘chapter’ of Ecclesiastes)
* Ogden Nash
* G.K. Chesterton
* Robert Herrick
* Edgar Allan Poe (dark, formal stuff)
* E. J. Pratt

1. “Original” means you created it, not the poet, and not me. (Well actually, a classy move is to name your sections with poem bits. So do that if you like. But don’t just title your assignment with the poem’s title. That’s lame.) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)