360

Degrees

of Text

*Using Poetry
to Teach Close Reading
and Powerful Writing*

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Poems as a Springboard for Academic Argument

While I use performance and creative writing in part to enrich students' lives with the sheer pleasures of literature and artful self-expression, I also use these strategies simply because they are effective. Not only are they the underused bridge between students' interests and their best interests, they are, I would argue, in some cases the most useful strategies for learning about literature, as they challenge readers to make meaning of texts in ways that traditional read/discuss/write approaches miss. There is, after all, a fundamental difference between the cognitive experience of describing a speaker's utterance and attempting to physicalize it, between learning about an aspect of an author's craft and trying one's hand at it. These approaches to text need not be exclusive, nor should they always be preferred over others; but in terms of academic outcomes—if critical reading and writing skills are ultimately what we seek to develop—they should not be viewed as frivolous either.

This chapter, which exploits these approaches in service of the academic essay, makes explicit my rationale for using all aspects of the 360-degree approach to teaching literature—engaging students through performance (sometimes the closest of readings), creative writing (a most deliberate kind of writing), and academic argument (expressing the findings of a close reading in powerful ways). This range of approaches offers many opportunities for students to access and work with text at various levels.

The key questions in this sequence focus on the sentence level—the verb and other sentence parts. As with aspects of image and form explored in earlier chapters, describing the sentence-level choices that make up the art of a poem requires additional vocabulary. With each new term—agency, syntax, sentence type, speech act, and so forth—students will acquire a new gateway to comprehension and pleasure, and a greater command of the language of academic discourse. This sentence-level knowledge is essential for understanding and composing their own explications and other academic arguments about texts.

Here is how this chapter works: Using everything they have learned so far about how to construct and represent the meaning of a poem through performance and informal descriptions (Think-Aloud Prompts and Workshop Templates), students will perform close readings and (optional) recitations of four new poems. Moving from the informal claims they practiced in think-alouds and workshops, students will explore more formal academic claims in sample explications. By using the Describing Text Templates (handout 9.D in the appendix) as a lens to explore sample explications that are provided, students will also have ample opportunity to engage with the kind of writing they will be asked to produce, so they can see fluent uses of the language they will employ in describing text. Ultimately, they will write and revise their own explication, using the Describing Text Templates, to scaffold their own fluent use of academic language.

The analysis and claim-making skills students gain in their practice with poetry will prepare them to make arguments about other kinds of texts, from essays to religious and political documents, as well as works of art. Yet regardless of the topic, the foundation of the strongest claims is a deep understanding of multiple perspectives. To move students forward to practice such rich claim making, I end the 360-degree tour with ideas for making the transition from poetry to other genres through debate. Teachers can capitalize on student interest in issues of gender, animal rights, war, and race and ethnicity that are raised by the pre-reading activities, discussions, and dueling recitations in this chapter. Further research into any of these questions opens opportunities to extend claim-making fluency with texts from other genres that represent multiple perspectives on these compelling issues. With plenty of fruit-bearing practice in talking the talk, and writing the talk, students will be poised to develop arguments across genres, while continuing to find new challenges that come with learning the nuances and language of each discipline or genre.

A final note about differentiation in this chapter: While the lesson steps provide the focus of the instruction and the "More Poems for Practice" section provides suggested texts for different levels of readiness, the assessment tasks are not varied. At this point, all students should be challenged to write about texts at their own accessibility level, and they should be provided with appropriate levels of peer and instructor support and adequate time to improve the fluency and complexity of their claims and supports. Instructors may also vary the evaluation criteria to accommodate varying levels of readiness; however, throughout this chapter I recommend that everyone follow the same process and produce

the same product, as formal academic writing is essential to college and career readiness.

Lesson 9: Analyzing How Agency Shapes Meaning in a Poem

Teacher-to-Teacher Note. "They Flee from Me" by Sir Thomas Wyatt is one of my favorite poems to teach and a favorite among students as well—well, that is, after they get past their initial fears of the archaic language. The focus of this lesson is to understand how verbs function in a sentence or phrase and to analyze how writers manipulate them. Being able to notice *agency*—recognizing who is performing the action—is one of the surest ways for students to become more powerful readers and writers. If the archaic language of "They Flee from Me" presents too great a barrier to entry for students, use one of the widely accessible poems in the "More Poems for Practice" menu at the end of this lesson. But don't shy away from verb analysis, regardless of the levels at which your students are working.

Depending upon how much direct instruction they have received in grammar, students will have varying levels of confidence in discussing different aspects of verbs. However, most students I've encountered, even the very young or struggling, can identify action words in a text, which is the easiest place to begin. And if they can get that far, they can usually answer the question, "Who is doing the action?" To discover the art of a poem via agency, one begins by answering those two questions: "What is the action?" and "Who is performing it?"

After applying what they already know about getting the gist of a poem (visualizing imagery, looking for the antecedent scenario, dividing the poem into parts, and identifying key aspects of the rhetorical situation or SOAPSTone), students will deepen their understanding of the text by practicing the new strategy of analyzing agency. Armed with a sophisticated understanding of the poem and an advanced vocabulary, they will then read a sample explication before making their own sophisticated claims about the art of a poem. For reliable sources for the poem's text see "Additional Resources for Chapter 4" at the end of this chapter.

Lesson Step 9.1: Understanding Agency

1. *Frontloading Knowledge Option:* Have students complete a prereading quick-write in response to the following questions: "Some say that a leopard can't change its spots. Is this true? Is the nature of a person determined at birth, a destiny of sorts that cannot be

escaped? Or can people change?" Facilitate a group discussion of student findings before reading the poem. Let students know that they will have a chance to explore these questions further as they listen in on a speaker's reflections about past relationships.

I also share a little background about the poet. (They love to hear about this guy!) Sir Thomas Wyatt lived in the first half of the sixteenth century and traveled throughout Europe as an ambassador for Henry VIII, who eventually had Wyatt imprisoned on suspicion that he was having an affair with Anne Boleyn, the queen who was famously beheaded by her husband. (By the way, an HBO series called *The Tudors* includes a snippet of this intriguing story.)

In Wyatt's "They Flee from Me," one of the most anthologized poems of the British Renaissance, the jilted lover recounts his wins and losses in the battle of the sexes, revealing the many dimensions of his character through his artful manipulation of agency. (For more background, search the Web for Sir Thomas Wyatt's incredibly interesting biography and for word histories, especially for the words *range*, *hart*, *newfangledness*, and *hath*.) For students who would have difficulty tackling this text, model a fluent reading or have a talented performer recite the poem before beginning a close reading and analysis. A one-sentence summary of the poem also helps set the stage for understanding. For example, "In this poem, the speaker is reflecting on his past relationships with women and tells us about one special woman in particular."

2. Let students know that the goal of this next sequence is to explore the art of a poem at the sentence level. In this case, exploring the verbs will help them get a better handle on this character. Distribute and review Key Literary Terms for Discussing the Verb and Other Sentence Parts (handout 9.A in the appendix). Tell students they will be taking a close look at agency in this poem and project these two sentences:

- The *agent* of action is the performer of the action.
- "The sun rose."

Introduce the idea that just as they used other keys to exploring a poem—knowledge of various aspects of imagery and form—they will now begin exploring verbs and other sentence parts to deepen their understanding of poets' choices at the sentence and phrase level. Tell them that they will begin by examining verbs (actions or states of being), and then they will look for the agents (the performers of the actions) and consider how other parts of a sentence fall around those two essential components. Using the example sentence "The sun rose," ask students:

- What is the action of this sentence? (rose)
- Who performed the action of rising? (sun)

Explain that since poets can construct a sentence in countless ways, it is sometimes useful to take a careful look at the agency in each image, noting who has been given control over an action. It is especially useful in this poem, as the drama lies in the most ancient battle for control, the battle of the sexes.

3. Project fluent and sophisticated student utterances as examples of students producing evidence-based claims. You can refer to these student utterances later as samples of the kind of claim making the Describing Text Templates support, demonstrating that explication is merely a more formal piece of writing based on the same kind of work they have been doing all along.

Distribute the poem and demonstrate how to do a different kind of close reading, one that focuses on the agent of action. Provide a model think-aloud with the first two lines. This is especially important because the archaic syntax of Wyatt's sentences can be difficult. I project the first sentence, "They flee from me that sometime did me seek / With naked foot, stalking in my chamber," and do a think-aloud:

> I am going to look for the verbs (or action words) first and underline them.

Have students take over or at least assist.

> As I begin visualizing these images, the words "Flee" and "seek" make me picture a chase. "Stalking" is another interesting word choice. That diction makes me think of a predator and prey. It makes me think of animals.
> Now I am going to look for agency or who is doing each of the actions. "They" is doing the fleeing. I am going to circle the agent "They."

Have students assist again, by asking who is doing the seeking. After they identify the speaker as the agent, it gets a little tricky.

> The order of sentence parts, or the sentence's syntax, makes it hard to tell whose foot is naked and who did the stalking, so I'll have to read on to find out more about the actors and actions and come back to make a better guess about that.

Have students continue on their own in small groups, underlining every verb and circling the agent or the owner of each action—not just the main verb of the sentence, but each image, every line, and every clause. As they work, have each group jot down a line-by-line paraphrase.

4. As you circulate, model Key Literary Terms for Discussing the Verb and Other Sentence Parts, as well as other *key terms*. Be sure each individual student has success in identifying verbs and their agents. Believe me, being able to talk with students about verbs and their agents, using a common vocabulary, will make future writers conferences, student writing workshops, and critical discussions of text exponentially more productive.

5. Bring the whole group together to get the gist of the poem. As always, have students identify the SOAPSTone and the antecedent scenario and complete a few paraphrasings. (Critical essays about the poem make for more interesting discussions. *Laura*, a book by Barbara L. Estrin, is a wonderful source for more on this. Though the text is written for a scholarly audience, certain passages might be shared productively with students to deepen their discussion. Sharing manageable portions of challenging texts will make scholarship seem less foreign, and this is a great time to do it.)

6. Suggest to students that taking a closer look at their findings about agency may help them to learn more about the character who is telling the story. Project the text and record group findings regarding agent and action. Next, model an analysis of agency in a think-aloud of the remaining lines of the first stanza, as always, asking students to assist.

> Let's think about what our findings about agency reveal about this character . . .
>   "I have seen them gentle, tame, and meek." So the speaker, "I," is performing the action. He has "seen" them. His <u>diction</u> here is really interesting: "gentle, tame, and meek." The word "tame" <u>is making me think</u> of animals again.

Have students assist with the next line.

> Can someone share a think-aloud of the rest of this stanza?

Students often point to other animal imagery: "wild," "put themself in danger / To take bread at my hand," "range," "busily seeking." (You may need to define *range*, which means to wander freely.)

> <u>These descriptions make me think</u> that the speaker has a pretty superior attitude toward women. Let's look at the verbs in the second stanza to see if this hypothesis is true.

The opening of the second stanza is almost verb-free. "Thanked be" and "Hath been" are the only verbs in the first four lines, until "did fall," and the agent of this action verb just happens to be none other than a woman's gown. To help students explore possible reasons why the speaker delays this verb, ask them these questions:

> What effect does the delay have in terms of the imagery unfolding? How does the verb count of the second half of the stanza compare with the first half? Who is performing the actions? What does that suggest about who is in charge in this stanza?

Students usually point out that the author's use of verbs has changed in some way, even if they don't get this sophisticated in their readings:

The delayed verb in the gown image creates a sense of antici-pation, and the rapid succession of verbs in the second half of the stanza creates the sense of motion, as if the speaker is remembering a whirlwind romance. Students will observe that the female character is explicitly developed in a different way than the women in the first stanza, who were described in verbs that suggest animalistic qualities rather than human ones.

7. As students explore this second stanza, highlight once again how useful it is to use one's voice as an interpretive instrument by having them play with the question "Dear heart, how like you this?" Have them explore how various intonations of the last two words lead to very different questions. (*Do you like what I am doing?* Or *Ha! How do you like being treated this way?)*

8. Continue exploring Wyatt's use of agency in the last stanza. Have students wrap up their analysis using an in-class writing before debriefing their findings using these questions:

> Based on your close look at agency, who seems to be in control of the action at various points in the poem? Compare the agents of action in the first, second, and third stanzas. What is the effect of shifting control of agency from one party to another in each part of the poem? What do these changes reveal about the situation or the speaker's attitude toward women? What is the speaker's attitude toward women in this last stanza? Toward this woman in particular? How might he view himself in relation to women as a result of this relationship?

Optional Lesson Step—Dueling Recitations of "They Flee from Me"

Teacher-to-Teacher Note. After the wonderful debate this poem inevitably causes in class discussions, dueling recitations are great fun, especially if you have some generous performers. Have several students prepare ad hoc or full-blown recitations or rehearse staged readings to explore the shifts in tone that accompany the character's shifting attitude toward women. It heightens everyone's appreciation of the poem and illustrates the importance of reading poems aloud to get closer to meaning.

1. Use the student handout Getting Ready to Recite: "They Flee from Me" (handout 9.B in the appendix) as a guide, and remind performers to apply strategies from previous recitation lessons as they work up their performances.

2. Have students debrief performances, discussing whether the speaker has or has not actually had a change of heart about women. Also consider whether or not he accepts responsibility for his role in botching relationships.

Lesson Step 9.2: Ad Hoc Debates

This mini-lesson gives students a chance to practice orally the kind of writing they will do in explication, making claims and supporting them with text. After the dueling performances or debate-oriented closing discussions, have students gather in groups of four. Larger groups or even half the class can do this exercise as well, if that makes more sense for you and your students. While smaller groups allow for more opportunities for individual speakers *to experience the genuine need to employ critical reading skills to win,* students who have never debated before might need a few trial runs with the support of the whole group. Also, if the ad hoc debate format doesn't work for you, more formal formats and rubrics are available online.

1. Assign one team an affirmative position and have the other team take the negative position on the following resolution: The speaker in Sir Thomas Wyatt's "They Flee from Me" was profoundly changed by his encounter with this special woman.

2. Give teams a few minutes to construct a claim. Have them provide at least two reasons to support the claim and defend those reasons with one or two specific references to the text.

3. Have one member of each team present their claims and supporting evidence in a two-minute opening argument. The opposing teams should listen carefully, jotting down notes for revising rebuttals.

    Let students know that their responsiveness to their opponent's arguments will make up a major part of their team's grade or score. This can be formal or informal, depending on how much time you want to spend on it. In the most basic, ad hoc situations, I have simply given a score of zero to two (Not really, 0; Sort of, 1; Definitely, 2) on each of four criteria:

    - Student clearly stated valid claims.

    - Student used valid textual evidence effectively.

    - Student predicted or responded effectively to counterarguments.

    - Student employed language effectively to communicate arguments powerfully.

4. After listening to initial arguments, give teams a chance to huddle before another member of each team presents rebuttals.

5. The final segment of the debate is the closing arguments, in which a member of each team has a chance to wrap up the team's argument and sharpen the delivery of main points and counterpoints.

6. Many adolescents enjoy the friendly competition of debate. Reflect on the debate process as a whole group. Point out how

the skills they have been learning in their study of poetry might apply to all sorts of academic arguments. In academia, after all, well-constructed claims and well-developed reasoning, grounded in text or data, wins in all aspects of academic, professional, and public discourse.

Lesson Step 9.3: Writing an Explication—Summary Drafting

Teacher-to-Teacher Note. After so much informal practice in describing text, it is time for students to write more formal descriptions of poems, otherwise known as explications. With the benefit of modeling, hands-on practice, and the vocabulary they have acquired, students are more than capable of reading and making sophisticated claims about text. This lesson step introduces the idea of summary as the opening part of an explication, which is a detailed walk-through that describes the art of a poem.

1. Distribute the handout Developing Summaries of Poems (handout 9.C in the appendix), along with the following question to guide students as they draft formal summaries of the Wyatt poem: "What is the story this poem tells (in a nutshell)?" Have students pair up, share their summaries, and then revise them. After revising, have a few pairs share their summaries with the entire class. Using the criteria in the handout, conduct an abbreviated whole class revision workshop to create models of whole poem summaries for the Wyatt poem. See the Chapter 1 section titled "How Can We Facilitate Writers Workshops with Artistic and Academic Benefits" for additional information on facilitating a whole class workshop. Have students record these models for reference in their notebooks.

2. Ask students to select a poem they feel comfortable discussing in writing. The poems in the "More Poems for Practice" section of each lesson might be a good list from which to draw, but the poetry websites highlighted in "Additional Resources for Chapter 4" offer plenty of quality poems for students to choose, and the process of surfing and picking a poem is fun and enriching in many other ways.

    Brief narratives and lyrics work best for beginners, but the most important thing for students to keep in mind as they select a poem is that they have to be drawn to the poem genuinely. If they find that they cannot summarize it, even after applying all of the close reading strategies they know, they should consider a more accessible poem. The poems students select will be used in the next several steps, including explication, so students should make sure they have picked a poem that is right for them: accessible, interesting, and so on. Allow students time to apply the close reading strategies they learned in Chapter 2 to gain a basic understanding of their selected poem (visualization, exploring

antecedent scenario, dividing the poem into parts, identifying SOAPSTone, and paraphrasing).

3. In class or for homework, have students select a poem and practice summarizing it. If possible, the whole class could have copies of all the poems students may be explicating so that class discussions about student writing make sense. If that is impossible, students ought to read their poems aloud before discussing samples of their writing or workshopping with peers.

4. Have students pair up and revise their summaries. Circulate as they work in pairs, looking for common areas for improvement and selecting samples for a brief whole class workshop.

5. Repeating the abbreviated whole class workshop format, have students share summaries with the class. Use a few samples as the basis of a whole class revision exercise focused on detailed yet precise summarizing sentences that convey some sense of the antecedent scenario and SOAPSTone.

Lesson Step 9.4: Introducing Explication and the Describing Text Templates

Teacher-to-Teacher Note. Assure students that they are prepared to read and write explications of poems. Some students may have previous experience with academic discourse, while others may be reading this kind of text for the first time. Regardless of their level of experience with formal interpretation, remind them that with the extensive vocabulary they have developed thus far in their study of poetry and their deep knowledge of the Wyatt poem, they are more than ready to tackle the project.

While there isn't an exact formula or template for organizing an explication, explications generally do the following:

- Describe the poem from beginning to end rather than feature by feature.
- Focus on one or two techniques or themes and discuss how they are developed throughout the poem.
- Consist of paragraphs corresponding with parts of the poem, which are divided and presented in chronological order.
- Cover a variety of aspects of author's craft and one or more techniques a poet has employed throughout the poem.

It is important to note that with the exception of certain specialized publications, explications of particular poems are frequently not stand-alone academic essays but are often woven into larger arguments about a writer, a writer's entire body of work, or themes and techniques in a particular period, genre, or another kind of collection. Still, we ask students

in upper-level high school classes and undergraduate college courses to write this kind of literary analysis, so we should show them how to do it well, lest we add our students' voices to the cries of desperation that can readily be found all over the Internet. Let's face it: fortunes are being made by selling this kind of paper.

1. Project the definition of an explication and share it with students. Here is the definition I use: *An explication is a commentary that walks readers through the meaning of a text by making claims about a poet's choices and supporting them with evidence from the text.* Remind students that they have made oral and written claims and supported them with textual evidence throughout their study of poetry and that they will now learn to formalize their claims in writing.

2. Ask students to take out their Think-Aloud Prompts and Workshop Templates. Have students review the handouts, reminding them that these templates helped them explain to peers how they interpreted the authors' choices in many texts. Then distribute the Describing Text Templates (handout 9.D in the appendix) and point out that making claims in formal academic writing is similar, but rather than speaking directly to the author this time, the audience of an explication is other readers and scholars who are interested in how you have interpreted the poem.

3. Review the templates and discuss similarities and differences between a larger claim and subclaim. Students may note that the associated meanings are not stated in the large claim, but they are clearly implied. In subclaims, meanings are often more explicitly spelled out. If you have recorded samples of sophisticated claims that students have made throughout the discussion, now is a good time to point out the similarities in the underlying format of this kind of claim.

Lesson Step 9.5: Exploring an Explication through the Lens of the Describing Texts Templates

1. Distribute the sample explication of "They Flee from Me" (handout 9.E in the appendix) and let students know that they will be seeing summaries and Describing Text Templates in action as they read this sample.

2. Before assigning the explication to students, be sure they engage in a brief evaluative reading/discussion of the sample, answering SOAPSTone questions. Then share the sample Explication Rubric for reference (handout 9.F).

3. Have students perform an initial reading of the explication. Have them locate the summary and discuss it. Then have them read

actively, marking directly on the page: a heart for *agree* or *good point*; a question mark for *question* or *discuss*; a check for *disagree*. They should then highlight other striking words, phrases, and sentences. Use these markings as a springboard for a discussion about the explication. In the course of your discussion, have a few students share a summary of the argument of the explication. Ask: "What does this explication argue the poem is about? What claims are made about Wyatt's technique?" You might even create a class outline of the explication, highlighting the organization, the reason for paragraph breaks, and so forth in your discussion.

4. Next, using the Describing Text Templates, have students take another close look at the opening paragraph in small groups. Have them identify the large claim and record it on a separate sheet of paper.

5. Next have students label the parts of the large claim according to the template labels—that is, choice maker, choice, and interpreted meaning.

6. Individually, have students label the parts of the subclaims in the first paragraph or two. Again have them record subclaims on a separate sheet of paper and label the parts using the subclaim template language. Remind them that each part of the template may not appear in every sentence, but each part of the claim template is explicitly or implicitly stated somewhere in the text.

7. Have students share these findings in small groups. As you circulate, you should also ask them to think about the organization of the explication; point out how the explication progresses from the beginning to the end of the poem. Once again, check in with each group to ensure every student's engagement.

8. Once you feel confident students are familiar with the process of identifying a claim and its parts, give students a moment to focus on another paragraph and to select and label a subclaim, individually. Collect these individual assignments to assess how well students are able to recognize claims. Individual conferences may be required to help all students learn to identify key elements of explicative writing, as students will soon be constructing their own claims and writing a complete explication. Have students connect evidence from the sample to parts of the rubric in their final discussion about the sample. The rubric is intended to help students understand the constituent parts of this specialized kind of writing. It can be modified over the course of drafts to focus on different aspects each time. A first draft workshop might focus only on "Development and Thematic Discussion." "Evidence" and "Presentation of Evidence" can be the focus of a second workshop. A final workshop can focus on sentence level fluidity and conventions.

Lesson Step 9.6: Constructing a Claim about a Poem

Teacher-to-Teacher Note. I first used the Describing Text Templates to help students develop claims while teaching a senior English literature course. I adapted it with novels, plays, speeches, art, and so on. Through my work in the school's literacy center, I was also invited by other English teachers to share this template in classes throughout our 9–12 curriculum in English. I didn't present it as a formula to be followed exactly, but as prompter to remind students to state explicitly "how they got what they got" out of a text. Though this assignment only asks for a claim, I find that students draft better claims after attempting to write the whole explication. Since it is a brief essay, drafting is an effective approach to deepening student thinking as they construct claims. The Describing Text Think-Sheet activity (handout 9.G in the appendix) in this step is essential, as it helps students think through their claim before they attempt to word it elegantly and concisely. Additional sample sentences from professional writing follow on an optional student handout.

1. Distribute the Describing Text Think-Sheet (handout 9.G) and have students develop original claims about the poems they used in the summarizing exercise in the previous step. Simply ask students to begin by jotting down what they think the poem is about—not the summary, but the commentary or observation the writer seems to be making about the subject, situation, or about the nature of being human. Let students think-write informally, before trying to work with the template. After a brief period of free writing, have them use the Describing Text Think-Sheet to formalize their claims.

2. Many claims about agency may be proposed, given the lesson, but the students shouldn't feel compelled to focus on that aspect. Some students may feel more empowered to make claims about elements of imagery or another element of the text. Encourage students to develop claims that involve the authorial choices they feel most comfortable identifying and discussing. Struggling students often have more success with brief, image-laden narratives, while students who have more practice in this kind of reading and writing may select longer or more abstract or complex texts. Be sure the self-selected texts are appropriate, given the rigor of the task.

3. After students have drafted claims, have them work in small groups of four, using the Describing Text Templates as a lens. Students ought to be able to label each part of the claim. If the reader isn't clear about some element of the claim because it is missing, unclear, or inelegantly written, they should annotate by writing questions directly on the claim and share their feedback with the claim maker. Students should then revise claims and

incorporate them into a solid opening paragraph, using the summaries they constructed in the earlier step.

4. Have students submit the opening paragraphs so you can select samples for a whole class workshop, using the format described in the next step.

Lesson Step 9.7: Whole Class Writing Workshop

Teacher-to-Teacher Note. Busy English teachers need not spend time on detailed comments for every student early in the drafting process. Getting a handle on general strengths and needs of a class is enough on a first draft. Since many of the issues that students have with a writing assignment are common at the beginning, a whole class discussion with a couple of rich samples can save a lot of time for both students and teachers. Individual comments and student conferences will prove much more fruitful after initial revisions based on a whole group discussion of major issues. Hearing positive and constructive feedback from teachers and peers is engaging and instructive; students enjoy being the subject of discussion. Also, it is another opportunity to model and guide peer analysis of student writing, which helps students hone their workshopping skills.

1. Select a few opening paragraphs to explore in a whole class workshop. Before copying the samples of opening paragraphs, be sure to remove names. The samples should be promising (key thematic ideas, accurate use of terms, etc.) yet reveal room for improvement in key areas of summary and claim (missing parts, unclear ideas about theme, uses of jargon, etc.). By key areas I mean the areas in which most students in the class seem to be having the same kinds of problems. Your revision process should be projected, and students should record your comments on their own copies for later reference.

2. Assure students that their work with summary and claim will become the basis for an explication, and they will be revising this opening paragraph as they develop their essays. They will be learning more about the poem with each close reading and each sentence they compose about it.

3. Ask students to begin commenting on the sample by discussing the strengths of both the summaries and the claims. Focus first on what is working. Then open up the discussion for areas of improvement, especially focusing on the need for further explanation and smoother incorporation of literary terms. (This is especially problematic in the portion of the claim in which the student reveals the *choice* that will be the focus of his or her essay.) Students writing explications for the first time often use literary terms eagerly, but not always elegantly, which is why the attention to phrasing in the samples is so important.

4. After your discussion, be sure to give students enough time to make revisions on their own opening paragraphs before leaving class. Circulate to answer questions, using their claims as the basis of a mini-lesson on employing explicative language in claim making. The large claims that you talk through with students will become their models, but the talk-through that you have with individual students can be the "aha" moment for which everyone has been waiting, so make sure you meet with as many students as possible. Reserve the time for it; this is when you can call upon sacred silent writing time practices again! As you circulate or meet with students individually or in small groups, be sure each student is experiencing success in claim making. If some students' difficulties seem insurmountable, you may have to encourage them to adjust their poem selection or rethink the focus of their claim.

More Poems for Practice

"A Blessing" by James Wright (widely accessible), "The Hate Poem" by Julie Sheehan (more difficult), and "Mending Wall" by Robert Frost (challenging.) These poems work well when using agency analysis as a gateway for comprehension. Have students at lower levels of readiness identify agents and actions in "A Blessing" or another accessible poem and write a sentence or two describing the main agents of action in the poem. Then have them summarize the poem. Have on-level students read one of the poems without focusing on anything in particular and then read it again, identifying all the agents and actions, before reflecting in writing on how reading for agency changed their experience. Have advanced students describe in a paragraph how a poet manipulates agency in a section of a poem in order to support a particular idea.

More Close Reading, Performance, and Powerful Writing Ideas

Close Reading

Have students summarize the claim and supporting evidence found in the sample explication, challenging them to provide a concise but accurate description of the explicator's interpretation.

Performance

Have students collect texts from different genres and historical periods (the bigger the range, the better) that tell us something about the battle of the sexes. Have students bring in pictures, etiquette books, signs, commercials, poems, old textbooks or picture books, sociological texts, and

the like, and ask, "What are some of the common themes in this ongoing battle?" Have them physicalize these texts using performance techniques from earlier lessons and create a larger performance that comments on this battle.

Artful Writing

Have students write about a time when they witnessed or took part in a conflict between two opposing forces (friend/enemy, wise self/reckless self, parent/child, etc.). As they revise original pieces, have them consider the ways in which verb choice can add a twist to an image. For example, instead of a brother "yelling," could he be "pecking"?

Curricular Debate Resolution

Gender is a destiny, an identity that cannot be escaped.

Lesson 10: Analyzing How Syntax and Sentence Variety Shape Meaning in a Poem

Teacher-to-Teacher Note. "Traveling through the Dark" by William Stafford is a difficult poem to teach. It can raise challenging questions, both literary and ethical, but it is really worth every effort readers are willing to give it. The concrete story alone is a powerful one, without any analysis. But when students apply the tools for literary analysis they have gained thus far, they will be able to explore the many artful and ideological nuances of the story. With this narrative poem, students will explore the nature of ethics and learn to account for poets' choices regarding additional aspects of verbs, sentence types, and syntax.

The writing component of the lesson focuses on the development of supporting paragraphs in explications. All the supporting paragraphs and sentences in an explication are subclaims. Using the poem itself as the organizational guide, students will learn to support the overall claims they developed in the previous lesson as they move from the beginning to the end of the poem. Paragraphs and the sentences within an explication are typically developed using mini-claims about each part of the poem (line-by-line, chunk-by-chunk, stanza-by-stanza claims). Students will also learn techniques for weaving textual supports into their sentences and paragraphs, beginning new paragraphs with each new stanza or with each meaningful chunk or part of the poem.

It may be helpful to review parts of poems at this point. Dividing a poem into parts is discussed in detail in lesson 2 (Chapter 2) on Sharon Olds's "I Go Back to May 1937." Briefly, though, the division of a poem

into parts can be determined by major changes in theme, topic, time, place, speaker, subject, or tone, or even by changes in certain elements of language.

Lesson Step 10.1: Exploring Sentence Parts

1. *Frontloading Knowledge Option:* Before introducing "Traveling through the Dark," have students perform a quick-write and facilitate a small group discussion based on the following debatable resolution: Human life is more valuable than animal life. This is a provocative idea that comes up in the reading of this poem, so it is worth thinking about prior to the reading. Assure students, who will readily engage in debate on the issue, that the issues raised by this poem will help them explore that very question and will also deepen their understanding of the nature of ethics.

2. Let students know that before they read the poem, they'll review another element of verbs to help them get the most from their reading. Have students take out their Key Literary Terms for Discussing the Verb and Other Sentence Parts (handout 9.A in the appendix). Then project these two sentences:

   ■ The boys ate the pizza.

   ■ The pizza was eaten.

   Introduce the idea that just as they used other keys to exploring verbs, they will look for another important aspect of sentence construction as it relates to verbs: the active and the passive voice. Tell them that they will continue examining verbs (actions or states of being) and then looking for the agents (the performers of the actions), and that they now will look at how other parts of a sentence fall around those two essential parts. Introduce the concepts using "The boys ate the pizza" as an example. Ask two more questions:

   ■ What is the action of this sentence? (ate)

   ■ Who performed the action of eating? (the boys)

   Then explain that this is an example of the active voice, a clause in which an agent is clearly responsible for the action, but that there are also sentences in which no particular agent seems to perform the action. Sometimes no agent is noted. It's just left out (passive voice).

   Using the second example, "The pizza was eaten," ask students to name the action and note that no agent has performed the action. This is an example of the passive voice. I often point out that the passive voice is used in academic, scientific, political, and legal writing to create an air of authority by removing fallible human agents or, in some cases, to avoid indicating responsibility for an action. It is important to note that even when a prepositional phrase is added to the sentence (by the boys) to indicate

the agent of action, the sentence itself can make grammatical sense without it. From a grammatical standpoint, the sentence proper is still constructed in the passive voice because it would still make sense even without the prepositional phrase that gives us the information about agent.

While poets rarely use the passive voice, there are other ways to manipulate syntax, as Stafford does, that allows him to avoid assigning a human agent, while maintaining the active voice. Giving agency to inanimate objects and avoiding the assignment of an agent to a particular action are tricks of the poetic trade that Stafford employs masterfully in this poem. Students will discover that he avoids assigning agency to verbs in several sentences by using the infinitive form of verbs and unusual syntax (the meaningful relationships in the order of parts of a sentence).

See handout 9.A, Key Literary Terms for Discussing the Verb and Other Sentence Parts, for important definitions and examples of technical terms used in the explication. To demonstrate the idea of syntax as an important feature in creating meaning, I use Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky" and have students determine the parts of speech for each of the nonsense words, illustrating that we can tell agent from action, and adjective from adverb, even without knowing the meaning of the words simply because they relate to each other in particular ways based on meaningful relationships between identifiable parts in the sentence such as articles.

3. Introduce "Traveling through the Dark" by sharing brief background information on William Stafford. He is one of America's most prolific poets. He wrote tens of thousands of poems in his lifetime and did not begin publishing them until later in his life. He lived much of his life in the western part of the United States and employed that region's imagery in much of his work, which often reveals his passion for environmental issues.

4. Have students prepare a brief impromptu performance of the poem by physicalizing the story in slow motion. Image by image, they should develop a silent, physical representation of the action that unfolds in the story.

5. Next, tell students they will have five to seven minutes to prepare a performance of the poem that illustrates the emotional drama the speaker undergoes. Every member of the group must speak some part of it, and every member of the group must be part of the visual performance. To facilitate everyone's participation, have students deploy single, dual, and choral (whole group) voices during their presentation at some point in the performance. Have them pay special attention to changes in tone and consider how these changes correspond with other elements of the text such as imagery, syntax, and the like.

Vocal representations of the drama are the desired product. To begin thinking about vocalizing the text, ask students to recall the possible antecedent scenarios for this utterance. As you

circulate like a director, use the following questions to prompt a range of presentations. Be sure to note that you don't necessarily have evidence to suggest that the speaker is the poet or that the speaker is male, but for ease of discussing it, we can refer to the speaker as *he*:

- What do you imagine about the speaking situation? Is the speaker telling this story casually to an old friend? Confessing it to his son or daughter?
- How does the emotional reliving of this moment sound coming out of the speaker's mouth?
- How does the speaker feel about what he has done?
- What lesson or commentary about being human might the speaker want to impart to this audience in telling this story?

6. Have students share performances; then wrap up the impromptu performances by asking students to share the gist of the poem.

Lesson Step 10.2: Analyzing Active and Passive Voice

1. After discussing the gist of the poem, model an annotation that focuses on labeling sentences according to the speaker's use of verbs. With students, go line by line, indicating when the speaker assigns a particular agent to an action and when the agent is withheld. Though voice is always active, he often avoids assigning responsibility to a particular agent. Model an analysis using the first stanza.

   I am going to underline the verbs (action words or verbs of being) first.

   Have students assist ("found," "is," "roll," "is," "swerve," "make").

   Now I am going to circle agents or who is doing each of the actions.

   Have students assist ("I").

   "I" is the only agent named in the first stanza. It is striking to me that there were all these action words, but no one seems to be doing them in several cases where the infinitive is used. Why might that be?

2. Ask students to consider how the use of the infinitive, which allows the speaker to avoid assigning an agent, affects the meaning of the sentence by having them rewrite several sentences with an agent. Begin with the last two lines of the first stanza, where there are three examples with no particular agent being assigned: "It is usually best to roll them into the canyon: / that road is narrow; to swerve might make more dead."

Next, have students insert possible agents for the verbs "roll," "swerve," and "make." Write sample sentences on the board. Then ask how each possible rewrite raises new issues in this ethical dilemma. Look through the rest of the poem as a class, discussing how the speaker manipulates agency in this way.

3. Have students continue on their own in small groups, underlining every verb and circling the agent or the owner of each action (not just the main verb of the sentence, but each image, every line).

4. As you circulate, model Key Literary Terms for Discussing Verbs and Other Sentence Parts (handout 9.A) as well as other key terms. Be sure each individual student has success in identifying verbs and their agents. Like agency, being able to talk with students about how writers employ verbs is useful for writers conferences, student workshops, and critical discussions of text. Model claim statements that fit the Describing Text Template orally, and prompt students to use textual evidence in their discussions with each other. They should challenge each other to defend claims early on at this point.

5. Project the entire text and have students share summaries of the poem. Then complete a whole class annotation.

6. As students discuss the implications of Stafford's choices, they should consider the reasons why the speaker might be inclined to use this unusual syntax. Compare, for example, the lack of agents in the first stanza with the use of agents in stanza two. What might account for the change? Students may discuss the nature of ethical dilemmas, which involve conflicts between the general rule (it is ethical that an animal life is sacrificed for human life when one has no other choice) and certain crisis situations where particular forces beyond our control make the general rule seem inapplicable or less clearly right (unborn fawn on the roadside.)

7. Before wrapping up the discussion, students should write individual answers to the following questions and share their responses, so they can practice claim making in writing and aloud.

   ■ What does the technique of moving from the suppression of agents to the clear assignment of agency reveal about the speaker's perception of his own role in this situation?

   ■ How does the speaker's perception of the situation change from the beginning to the end of the poem?

   ■ What commentary does Stafford seem to be making about the nature of ethical decision making in this poem?

   ■ What techniques does Stafford use to make his commentary on ethical decision making through the form of a poem?

Lesson Step 10.3: Using Textual Evidence to Develop Paragraphs in an Explication

Teacher-to-Teacher Note. Remember: all the supporting paragraphs and sentences in an explication are subclaims. An explication walks readers through each part of the poem—in some cases, every line, sentence, and stanza—from the beginning to the end, using many subclaims that support the large claim. In this step, students will use the sample explication of "Traveling through the Dark," found as handout 10.A in the appendix, to explore mini-claims at work.

1. Have students read through the sample explication, identifying its overall claim and discussing its parts using the Describing Text Templates (handout 9.D) and the process found in the previous lesson. Then have them note mini-claims that are made throughout the rest of the essay. Have them look for the choice maker, verbs, choice (word, technique, image, etc.), associated meanings, and interpreted meanings. Students may actually record and label the parts as in the previous step.

    Again, the associated meanings and interpreted meanings are those text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections that allow poets to rely on commonly shared experiences to convey meaning to readers. Sometimes they are familiar tropes such as a river or a road that suggest a metaphorical journey, while other times they are details that reveal things without saying them explicitly, like the word "purred" in the Stafford poem, which suggests comfort and warmth.

2. Have students read through the sample explication again to see how explicators communicate the entire poem, without copying the entire poem onto the page, noting sentences that introduce, explain, summarize, or weave in text from the poem. Have them highlight or underline examples of direct quotations, summary, paraphrase, and description and label them as such.

3. In a large group debrief of this exercise ask students, "How does the writer make use of the text in the argument?" In other words, how else other than direct quotation does the writer use the text to support the explication? Have students point to specific examples of other ways (summary, paraphrase, description) in which text may be used to support an argument.

4. After discussing the claims and the use of textual evidence, have students examine the way paragraphs are broken. Have students individually determine the reasons why the writer moves from one paragraph to another; then have them share in a small or large group closing discussion. Have them take a moment to analyze transitions from one paragraph to the next by asking, "What is the reason for a new paragraph? What words and phrases are used to make the transition from one paragraph to another?"

Students should note paragraphs are organized around key developments in the poem, and since the poem is a narrative, each new development coincides with an event in this brief story.

5. If they haven't done so already, have students return to work with their selected poems (from the summary and claim exercise) and complete their original explication drafts, paying special attention to constructing subclaims, incorporating a variety of textual evidence, and determining paragraph boundaries. (Be sure to share a rubric. See the Explication Rubric, handout 9.F in the appendix, before students begin drafting. *Please note:* The rubric represents an atomistic approach to evaluating writing, rather than a holistic approach. It also doesn't tend to the nuances of a writer's command over language, originality, or depth of thought. A more holistic rubric can be provided at various points along the way to describe the strengths and areas for revision before final grading rubrics are provided. Consider it a starting point, rather than an end-all, be-all description of good explicative writing.)

Lesson Step 10.4: Whole Class and Small Group Explication Workshops and Individual Student Conferences

Teacher-to-Teacher Note. The focus of the first whole class explication workshop is to find errors of omission. In other words, this workshop focuses on finding interpretations that lack the accompanying explanation to help readers understand how explicators reached their conclusions. Younger writers sometimes think everyone will see the text exactly as they do. Through this process, students become more adept at finding the omissions on their own and revising them out with more explanation and more evidence. The most important work in this process is helping students spell out their thinking. I have found that adolescents share original and brilliant interpreted meanings but often have trouble articulating what led to the interpretation. Students who have not written academic arguments before are not always aware of the burden of evidence, so now is the time for peers to focus on coaching each other to incorporate textual evidence and to guide an audience's interpretation of it.

Another major issue in early drafts will be the muddled paragraphing. This is the moment at which we wonder why we ever disparaged the five-paragraph essay with the neat little three-point claim. We have to face this disorder with courage, recover our senses, and remember that the students have done amazing analytical thinking and are saying really smart things, even if those things are coming out a bit jumbled up. The main purpose of this first explication is to get students thinking deeply about the construction of a text and developing fluency in describing text. Students will focus on revising their explications with peers over the next two lessons (more articulate sentences, then more organized paragraphs).

1. Before or after completing an initial peer workshop, using the Explication Workshop handout (handout 10.B in the appendix), have students submit drafts of an entire explication and sort through them looking for rich student samples to illustrate one or two strengths and main areas of concern. Make copies after removing student names and project them for the whole class to see.

2. A good sample should illustrate promise and a need for improvement that is common among many other students (this may range from organizing a paragraph to constructing a claim). At this stage, I often wish for a rubber stamp that says: "The ideas in this paragraph seem to relate to the same part of the poem, but I am not sure on what the paragraph is focused. Maybe you need a good topic sentence that tells me what development this part of the poem is describing." Or "I sort of understand what you mean, but I need to see more explanation and more support from the text to understand how you arrived at this interesting idea." Or "What do you mean by _____?" Or "How do the specifics of the text lead you to this association, which is really interesting?"

3. Begin, as always, by looking at what is working, asking students to point out the strengths of a student sample. Then focus your questions, comments, and sample revision work on a single area of concern that applies to the majority of the class or to a small group with whom you are working. Students should record comments and suggestions for revisions on the sample.

4. Provide "my paper" time after each sample paper revision activity in the whole class workshop so students have time to examine and revise their papers in light of each aspect of revision you have highlighted.

5. After two rounds of whole class workshopping—three at most— have students reexamine their own explications and revise. Again honor the student drafts with class time, so that students can consult you during this complex process.

6. Next, have students workshop their best independent drafts in pairs or small groups if time allows for more than one reader to workshop the paper. The first workshop and perhaps the second should be focused on making sense of good thematic ideas. Share the questions found on the Explication Workshop handout, and make sure students read silently and write in complete sentences on their partner's paper before discussing it with the writer. This is where the creative writing workshop training comes into play. Students will need both their explications and copies of their poem to share with peers.

7. Repeat student workshops several times if necessary, having students revise in between while you meet with individual stu-

dents. The focus of remaining workshops ought to be on evidence, organization, elegance, and, finally, conventions. Students should be pushing each other to write evidence-filled paragraphs that support the larger claim using just the facts, all the facts, and nothing but the facts of the poem.

Individual teacher-student conferences using the precise vocabulary you and your students now share are most fruitful at this stage. Your familiarity with the original draft, along with a focus on key areas for development, makes for efficient conferencing. As we all know, a seven- to ten-minute conference with each student on a brief essay can make all the difference in writing instruction, moving everyone forward in a common direction, while accommodating differences in terms of pace and mastery levels. Plan ahead for in-class and out-of-class conference time at this crucial stage, if possible. (See Rick Wormeli's work on differentiating assessment.) While this may be impossible to do regularly, we should attempt to build in regular conference time each semester.

8. Have students complete final revisions of their explications before submitting them for evaluation.

More Poems for Practice

"At the Un-National Monument along the Canadian Border," "A Ritual to Read to Each Other," and "At the Bomb Testing Site" are accessible poems by William Stafford that lend themselves to further exploration of the themes and techniques in "Traveling through the Dark." Focusing on a single author and exploring common themes deepens a reader's understanding of all of the writer's poems. Have students at lower levels of readiness work with the poem they selected for their explication project to analyze agency and write a brief reflection of how reading the poem through that lens had an impact on their understanding of the poem. Have on-level students select a few excerpts of the poem about which they are writing and describe the impact of a poet's selection of a particular agent of action in a particular image, phrase, or sentence on a particular idea. In addition to the on-level task, have advanced students research and read several pieces of criticism about their poem or poet and carefully summarize the other writer's ideas.

More Close Reading, Performance, and Powerful Writing Ideas

Close Reading

Using the Describing Text Template, have students develop a claim about the poetry of William Stafford and support it with brief explicative paragraphs on a group of poems.

Performance

This poem is so full of drama that it is really a wonderful piece for recitation. Encourage students to prepare a recitation of this poem or another of Stafford's poems using the sample recitation assignment from lesson 4. Alternatively, have students physicalize a range of nature poetry in an ensemble until a clear theme about nature emerges to guide a performance based on the title "The Poet Speaks of the Natural World."

Artful Writing

Have students write about a moment in which they had to make a difficult choice; then have them take a close look at their verbs, revising a sentence written in the active voice to passive, or vice versa, to determine the impact of these choices on syntax and ultimately tone. If they want to go the next step further, they might even try one of Stafford's infinitive tricks!

Curricular Debate Resolution

Resolved: The speaker in the poem "Traveling through the Dark" is certain he has done the right thing by the end of the poem. See lesson step 9.2 for ad hoc debate instructions, through which students can conduct mini-debates based upon this resolution.

Lesson 11: Understanding How Poets Create Varying Speech Acts within Sentences and Lines

Teacher-to-Teacher Note. In this lesson, students will explore the concept of speech act, that is, the ways in which we perform actions with our words. Leading students in this way through Walt Whitman's "Beat! Beat! Drums!" allows them to practice asking another set of questions that will help them get the gist of a text, delve into close reading, and ultimately create better arguments about texts.

Like the preceding lesson in this chapter involving "Traveling through the Dark," the second half of the lesson is devoted to developing more powerful supporting paragraphs for their original explications. Students will learn to strengthen these evidence-filled paragraphs by selecting more precise verbs for describing the actions and ideas within a text and for describing a writer's choices in the creation of a text. They will also revisit paragraph organization.

Lesson Step 11.1: Introducing Speech Act

1. *Frontloading Knowledge Option:* Before introducing the poem, have students perform a quick-write on the following question: "Is it

ethical for nations to recruit their young to fight wars?" After students have had an opportunity to discuss the issue, segue into your introduction of the poem by letting students know that "Beat! Beat! Drums!" was written, published, and revised several times during the course of the Civil War before becoming part of Walt Whitman's book *Drum Taps* (1865). If students need more background information about the American Civil War, PBS has wonderful documentary footage and teaching resources related to Whitman in Ken Burns's series *The Civil War.*

2. Before introducing the poem, explain that through words, humans perform actions. We issue orders, offer explanations, say prayers, make claims, and apologize; we even perform all sorts of legal actions, including committing to marriage or agreeing to tell the truth under oath! To introduce the concept of speech act, I have students consider one-word sentences. I project the following:

   - Right?
   - Right.
   - Go?
   - Go!

   Then I have student volunteers say these four illustrative examples aloud.

   As students intone these sentences, they can hear how the very same words can mean entirely different things depending upon the speech act they are intended to perform. Ask students to consider what action each of these one-word sentences performs: "Right?" seeks confirmation or agreement. "Right" affirms. "Go?" asks a question. "Go!" issues a command. In using a question mark as opposed to the period, for example, the word "Right?" is really a complete sentence that asks "Do you agree?" or "Am I correct?" These examples show how intonation, especially in spoken text, has as much to do with conveying meaning as the semantic meaning of the words themselves. Explain to students that just like individual lines within a poem, entire poems have to be considered in terms of speech acts as well. The genre of a poem can take the form of an elegy, a prayer, a definition, and so on.

3. In written text, we often use punctuation, such as a question mark, to guide a reader's interpretation of the intended speech act. But poetry, like the sheet music of a great symphony, sometimes offers itself to many valid interpretations and may be intoned differently by each reader depending upon their interpretation. As poets craft their words, they are mindful of the notion of speech act; sometimes they cue readers about how to intone a sentence for a particular performative effect, and sometimes their cues allow us to explore a doubleness or tripleness that challenges readers to examine the subtle complexities of an idea. (Think back to

the Sir Thomas Wyatt poem in which the speaker's lover asks, "Dear heart, how like you this?" It can be read as two distinctly different questions: "Do you like what I'm doing?" or "How do you like being treated this way?") Indeed, the doubleness or tripleness of a line's meaning is often part of a poem's genius. This key element differentiates literature from other kinds of writing. Exploring multiple possibilities for speech act is yet another way to investigate the speaker's attitude toward the subject or to explore a poem's tone and how tone might shape the way the poem is spoken aloud.

4. As always, sharing a little background about the poet gives students something to grab onto and sometimes provides an interesting hook. Here is how I introduce Whitman's poem:

   Walt Whitman is widely considered the father of modern American poetry. He celebrated the themes of diversity, individuality, and freedom through images and words from everyday American life. His work in the nineteenth century established a uniquely American voice among the world's great poets. His reach into the twenty-first century and beyond affirms his influence as a master and as an innovator. The following poem is a work composed at the beginning of the American Civil War, a war he thought was just and necessary, and in which several of his own brothers fought.

   Whitman covered the war as a journalist and volunteered in field hospitals, witnessing the horrors of war firsthand. Published in *Drum Taps* (1865), this "recruitment poem," as many scholars read it, gives insight into Whitman's initial belief in the Union's cause—saving the republic. Contemporary readers may see it differently, which, incidentally, raises interesting questions about the construction of the poem itself. Since the subject is war, it is important to contract with students about being sensitive to the fact that members of their own learning community may have very close ties to those currently serving in the armed forces around the globe today. It is a provocative issue.

5. In small groups, have students think aloud as they read the poem, applying the strategies from previous lessons: visualization, identifying antecedent scenarios and SOAPSTone, dividing the poem into parts, and paraphrasing. As their discussions unfold, some students may see this as an antiwar poem, in which a speaker ironically issues commands yet shows in vivid detail the destructive effects of war on civil society; others will argue the poem is an exuberant plea to recruit fighters for a just war.

6. After a large group debrief of their initial findings, have students explore competing interpretations using the technique of exploring line break, which was introduced in lesson 5 in Chapter 3. The technique involves looking at the text as a set of *sentences*,

then as set of *lines*, separate units of meaning distinct from the sentences of which they are a part. Poets play with enjambment, allowing readers to take away one meaning from a line and a different meaning when that line is read as part of a sentence. Then, as an example, look at the last line of the first stanza. "So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill you bugles blow."

Read the whole stanza aloud. Point to the last lines and ask, "Is that last line an order or an accusation?" To heighten their awareness of both possibilities, have a volunteer say that particular line out loud as an *order* from the commander of the bugles and drums. Then have a volunteer say it aloud as if it were an *accusation* against the destructive drums and bugles, coming from someone who is pleading to stop the war. As part of the sentence this line must be spoken as a *command*, where "so" might be replaced with the word *therefore.* In this scenario, the speaker is arguing that the war is worth fighting (to end slavery, to save the union, etc.) and is worth any amount of sacrifice; therefore, people cannot carry on with their everyday lives. Taken as a separate unit of meaning, however, this *line* could be an *accusation* that explains the result of these deafening drums. The drums of war are the ruin of everyday living. This *line* could be spoken as an answer to the question "What is the cause of this horror?" The word "so" would be an adverb, describing the degree of fierceness with which the drum is whirring and pounding.

7. To deepen student interest about whether this can only be read as a recruitment poem or if it is also possible to read it as an antiwar poem, have students take a close look at the role of line break in determining speech act. Explain that Whitman wrote the poem early on in the war, genuinely believing that the war was just, but by the date of its publication in book form, Whitman's views on the war may have been tempered by the horrors he witnessed. He spent a great deal of time volunteering in field hospitals, where wounded soldiers suffered. The bloody conflict took a toll on his family and on hundreds of thousands of others. *Drum Taps* in many ways is a chronicle of changing sentiments about the war, revealed through the American poetic lens.

Have students analyze both possibilities by having them label each *sentence* according to the type of speech act the speaker is performing. Then look at each *line* separately and consider other possible speech acts that each line might be performing. In small groups, readers should experiment with different readings aloud, always asking, "What is the speaker doing here? What action is the speaker performing with words?"

For example, is he or she dispensing a command, making a plea, asking a question, or explaining a cause and effect relationship? As students practice this strategy, it is useful to have them type out or write out the entire poem as a series of sentences and as a series of self-contained lines to explore the difference

between line and sentence meaning. Above all, it is essential that they practice saying each line aloud according to the speaker's intention.

8. Bring students back together to share their findings. Project the text and label the speech act line by line and then sentence by sentence before returning to the question of whether this should be read as a recruitment poem or as an antiwar poem. Ultimately, the question relates to the overall speech act of the text. Ask students, "Is the text a recruitment poem or an antiwar poem? What is the overall speech act here?"

Optional Lesson Step: Getting Ready to Recite "Beat! Beat! Drums!"

Teacher-to-Teacher Note. The question of whether we ought to read it as a recruitment poem or an antiwar poem is an excellent subject for academic debate and also an excellent opportunity for students to present competing interpretations through dueling recitations. Have students review the guide in handout 11.A and prepare full-blown recitations or simple ad hoc staged readings.

1. Give students time to prepare presentations and share them in class. After sharing recitations, have students discuss their final interpretations based on the question "Is this a recruitment poem or an antiwar poem, or can it be both?"

2. To wrap up, students might want to entertain questions about the role of author or artist intention versus audience interpretation. "Who ought to have authority over our understanding of a poem—the poet, the poem, or the reader? If a reader interprets a poem differently than an author intended, is that okay? Can a poem still be considered a good poem if this happens? What contextual factors may cause readers to interpret differently? Can a number of conflicting interpretations of a poem be valid?"

Optional Lesson Step: Ad Hoc Debates

Rather than or in addition to the dueling recitation approach, students may debate a resolution about the poem using the ad hoc debate format found in lesson step 9.2. The resolution I recommend for "Beat! Beat! Drums!" is "Whitman's speaker is being ironic, not vehement, when he encourages people to go to war."

Lesson Step 11.2: Analyzing Another Sample Explication

1. Explain that just like writers of imaginative texts (poetry, drama, and fiction), strong academic writers are very conscious of their verb choices. A good verb choice can be a great workhorse, accomplishing many tasks at once. Follow the steps below to

illustrate this concept as you share and review student handout 11.B, a sample explication of "Beat! Beat! Drums!"

2. Remind students that academic writers are constantly making arguments as they summarize and describe. In fact, as the sample sentences from the Sir Thomas Wyatt explication (handout 9.C) show, the explicator often describes, summarizes, and argues all at once. The writer describes his or her overall interpretation of the poem in his or her large claim, but the heart of the supporting argument lies in the verbs that make up sentences throughout the explication. Have students read the Sample Explication of "Beat! Beat! Drums!" and mark at least three sentences with a heart (agreed or good point), a question mark (disagreed or must discuss), or a check mark (disagree).

3. In small groups, have students summarize the large claim. Then, in a whole class debrief, share their findings and additional comments and questions about the explication.

4. Next, have students independently reread the first paragraph or two, circling the verbs and underlining agents as they read. Have students note how an explicator gives agency to the *writer's choice*, while at other times it is the *speaker* or the *text* itself that seems to perform an action. Have students find an example of where the explicator assigns responsibility for an action to the following agents: the poet, the speaker, a literary device (image, metaphor, simile, etc.), or a mark of punctuation. In the next step, students will revise the explications they have been crafting using this heightened consciousness of how one describes a text. (Additional teaching notes for leading students through a revision focused on agency in explicative writing are included with handout 11.B in the appendix.)

Lesson Step 11.3: Revising through an Examination of Agency and Verb Choice

Teacher-to-Teacher Note. Since jumbling may still be a challenge for some students, work with sentence-level revisions may be targeted at the topic sentences that set the stage for each new paragraph. If students spend time on refining those topic sentences, they will have a better time of focusing their evidence throughout the paragraph as well.

1. Distribute and review the Verbs for Describing Texts handout (11.C in the appendix), which was, incidentally, compiled by my students from professional pieces of literary analysis. As an extension to this exercise, you might have students research professional explications of poems and create their own lists of verbs. (Sources designed for high school and undergraduate courses—such as *Poetry Criticism*, *The Explicator*, *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, and the like—are great for this fruitful assignment.)

2. Begin the revision process by modeling verb choice revision with a few sample student paragraphs. Project and distribute copies of the samples. Ideally, these models should offer themselves to the possibility of revision through agency and verb choice. Lead students through an examination of sample student sentences and ask students to make suggestions, using the lists, for more exact or more useful verbs. Be sure suggestions are substantiated as to why one verb accomplishes more than another in terms of the claim. See Presentation of Revision Homework (teaching aid 1 in the appendix) and Before and After: Workshopping with Templates and Revising Verb Choice (teaching aid 2) for useful examples.

3. Working in small groups, students should revise a sentence or two from their own paragraphs by revising their choice of agent. For example, instead of beginning a sentence with "The poet suggested," it would be more accurate to say, "The speaker suggested," or "The poet's choice indicated," or something similarly precise. Have students use the Verbs for Describing Text handout and select a few verbs for revision from their own writing. Indicate that the precision of the verb is key to good explicative writing. Circulate and conduct mini-conferences as students work in small groups. This is also a good time to ensure that the paragraphs are focused on a clear interpretive claim and that they are well supported.

4. It is time to collect these well-wrought explications and evaluate them. As you evaluate, I encourage you to reward the strengths of each explication, especially at the sentence level. The lessons have focused on developing student fluency with claims and subclaims, much more than they have focused on paragraphing and organization, so the evaluations ought to reflect that focus as well. The culminating explication in the next lesson will allow you to reinforce all of those values and to zero in on paragraphing as well.

More Poems for Practice

"Dulce Et Decorum Est" by Wilfred Owen (somewhat difficult) and "Here, Bullet" by Brian Turner (fairly accessible) are war poems that also open up in interesting ways when entered through an analysis of speech act, especially when analyzed out loud with consideration to line break. "The March into Virginia Ending in the First Manassas" (July 1861) and "Shiloh" (April 1862) by Herman Melville are challenging but wonderful poems for exploring changing speech acts, and they serve as contemporary counterpoints to Whitman's work in some ways. Students at lower levels of readiness should be writing paragraphs about poems and researching and reading explications just like everyone else. Rather

than steering students into difficult scholarly texts, select poems and accompanying readings from the periodical *Poetry for Students* and other sources designed specifically for younger readers. Whether students are on their way, on level, or advanced, have them read and summarize a secondary piece of writing about a poem, after annotating key features of explications including claims, subclaims (topic sentences and supporting sentences,) paragraph breaks, and verb choice. Advanced students should be asked to incorporate information from secondary sources into their paragraphs.

More Close Reading, Performance, and Powerful Writing Ideas

Close Reading

Students can research "Beat! Beat! Drums!" and other poems from Whitman's *Drum Taps* and find model explications for these poems. They can even see changes from various editions. Students can then develop a paper discussing the influence of the Civil War on Whitman's poetry. The book's publication history is especially interesting.

Performance

Have students find and develop other texts (poems, speeches, narratives, laws, proclamations, tweets, etc.), especially those from the era of the Civil War, and use them to develop a performance that helps an audience explore different perspectives on the Civil War and its legacies in contemporary global life. I have recently worked with a number of teachers who have connected Whitman's poem to bullying and youth violence.

Artful Writing

Have students write a script made of found text that illuminate the terms *civil* and *war*.

Curricular Debate Topic

Herman Melville wrote the poem "The March into Virginia Ending in the First Manassas," in which he, like Whitman, comments on the boys and men recruited to fight the Civil War. Using "Beat! Beat! Drums!" and Melville's poem, have students engage in mini-debates on the following resolutions:

- Melville's poem expresses the view that recruiting young men to fight a war is wrong.

■ Whitman's poem expresses the view that recruiting young men or anyone else to fight a war is sometimes just and necessary.

Lesson 12: Analyzing How the Parts Reflect the Whole

Teacher-to-Teacher Note. Students have had a lot of practice reading poems closely with their peers and developing an explication with a lot of support. Now it is time for them to try it more independently. The focus of this last lesson in close reading is on exploring thematic unity in the poem. It is time for students to employ all of the close reading strategies they've been practicing in order to discover how all the big and little parts of a great poem are united by thematic coherency. Students may end up focusing on the revelations of only a few close reading strategies as they draft an explication, but they should explore 360 degrees of the poem before determining the focus of their claim, so I encourage teachers to have students employ those performance and imitation strategies as they prepare their final projects.

While the final project is ultimately a nontraditional academic product, I believe that writing a text about a text is another way to understand it, a way to process one's learning as a result of using other approaches. Secondly, if your students are like mine, they have gotten pretty good at noticing interesting things and making great claims, but the things can get a bit jumbled up in their explications. The writing portion of this lesson is focused on paragraph coherency and is the final step.

Unlike other lessons, in which the teacher presented a very specific entrée into the poem, students should be challenged to construct and represent the poem's meaning independently. (Remember? I do it, we do it together, you do it together, you do it alone.) With the Lorna Dee Cervantes poem they are about to explore, students will examine the ways in which each aspect of three major elements of the poem (imagery, form, and language) contribute to the theme. After modeling this, you will challenge students to find that coherency in a poem of their choice.

At the end of the 360-degree tour, I celebrate all modes of representing meaning (group performance, recitation, imitation, multimedia, art, etc.) because they can be dazzling experiences that help everyone understand why poetry as an art form has remained one of the most important parts of all human cultures! The sky is the limit in terms of the products students share in representing the meaning of the poems they select.

However, the college prep English teacher in me also requires a written explication, not because it is better than other ways of representing meaning, but because it is an important route to constructing meaning,

and because it is the one that is rewarded most in academia. While this explication can simply be graded like their other formal essays, students may elect to use it as part of a performance-oriented culminating project (program text for a performance, a placard to accompany a painting, an opening argument in a debate, etc.) Students can collaborate with you to devise a rubric for evaluating their independent projects. For reliable sources of the poem's text see "Additional Resources for Chapter 4."

Lesson Step 12.1: Independent Study Reflection

Before sending students off with their poetic licenses in hand, it is important for them to reflect upon what they have learned about reading texts. This abbreviated independent study of Lorna Dee Cervantes's 1998 poem "Freeway 280" will give students an opportunity to reflect metacognitively on their own reading strategies and remind them of the strategies they now have in their toolbox for approaching a poem of their choice.

1. *Frontloading Knowledge Option:* Share the following background on Lorna Dee Cervantes, one of the most critically acclaimed poets of our time.

   Born in San Francisco, California, in 1954, Lorna Dee Cervantes is one of America's most prominent Chicana poets. In her work, she explores the impact of race, gender, culture, and economics on individuals and their communities. In her first book of poetry, *Emplumada*, she explored Chicana identity in poems such as "Freeway 280." Many of the works in the collection, written in English, contain untranslated Spanish words. In her next two books of poetry, she continues to focus on the struggles and triumphs of Chicana women, while examining everyday social injustices and the consequences of political and social radicalism.

   (If students are not aware of California's acquisition of Mexican territory, you may want to share some brief background about the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, 1848.)

2. Let students know that the poem "Freeway 280" adds a new level of challenge for readers in that it incorporates another language, Spanish. If necessary, provide students with a glossary of Spanish terms found in the poem. English language learners and bilingual students may readily understand the use of dual languages, while others may wonder why the poet chose to write in both, rather than one. (The question of why she uses dual languages in this particular poem is a wonderful opening for the students to begin their study.)

3. Have each student work independently and silently, employing as many of the close reading strategies as possible to make sense

of and make meaning of the text. You may want to review the focus of each step of the 360-degree tour (visualization; think-alouds; antecedent scenario analysis; division into parts; genre analysis; paraphrase; SOAPStone; read-aloud; form and language analysis—genre, sonic patterns, allusion, stanzaic forms; agency analysis; speech act analysis; and sentence analysis).

4. After students have had plenty of time to work with the poem, examining the imagery, form, verbs, and sentences, have each student write complete sentences as they answer the Independent Study Reflection questions in handout 12.A.

5. Using students' written responses to the close reading activity, facilitate a large group discussion of the poem, in which the speaker explores tensions in her bicultural, bilingual identity. Ask students to discuss the ways in which the speaker represents her struggle to live in California as a Latina, often feeling neither fully Mexican nor fully American. Have students trace the aspects of the poem that reveal her inner debate, as she struggles to determine how to proceed as a member of either, neither, or both of her larger cultural communities. Have students share summaries and claims as a whole group.

6. Following their discussion of the poem, ask students to write their reflections on their own process of constructing meaning. Ask, "Did you notice a particularly useful strategy among those you've tried? Did you have any surprising results?"

7. Collect these reflections and use the data to inform your instruction as you plan additional textual analysis units.

Lesson Step 12.2: Examining the Function of Strong Topic Sentences in an Explication

Teacher-to-Teacher Note. Let students know that while the focus of previous lessons was on constructing the meaning of a poem and describing it to an audience, students will be challenged to hone their organizational skills within the context of explicative writing. This lesson is a paragraphing lesson that places special attention on the function of a topic sentence in transitioning from one part to another.

1. Point out that strong explications divide the poems into parts, either based on stanza breaks or on other developments in the poem, such as events in a narrative, changes in imagery, and so on (see lesson 2 in Chapter 1 and lesson 2 in chapter 4). As in any form of prose, paragraphs are guided by topic sentences, the subclaim that connects parts of the explication back to the larger claim and guides the development of a particular idea, which is then supported by other subclaims. Remember, the way one divides the poem into parts varies. A sonnet is often discussed quatrain by quatrain; other poems are discussed stanza by stanza. Others,

such as Stafford's "Traveling through the Dark," are divided in terms of the emotional developments of the poem. Point out that while all the sentences make claims of some sort, larger claims and subclaims serve different purposes in an explication.

2. If students find the task of developing their own topic sentences too challenging in this abbreviated activity, the same activity on paragraph coherency can be scaffolded with the topic sentences provided in optional handout 12.B, Explication Outline. Otherwise, follow the steps below.

3. Ask students how they divided the Cervantes poem in their independent reading.

4. After you have discussed possible divisions, have students work in small groups and develop a large claim and several topic sentences for supporting paragraphs in an explication.

5. After selecting a few strong sample topic sentence subclaims, have students develop supporting sentences for a single topic sentence. Give students ten to fifteen minutes to complete the paragraph individually, as you circulate to answer questions.

6. Students should perform a quick-write, reflecting on their own strengths and challenges in independent analysis and explication writing before sharing with others and revising.

Lesson Step 12.3: Evaluating Student Writing for Paragraph Coherency

1. Have students evaluate Sample Student Explications, handout 12.C in the appendix.

2. Lead students through a reading of the sample explication. Ask students to engage with it as they have with the work of their own peers and professional samples, noting what they like or agree with and what they disagree with or would like to discuss. Ask students, "What are the strengths of this piece? What might help this writer make this explication better?" Gather student suggestions and share the sample with comments to find similarities and differences between the teacher's comments and their own. Have students read the next revision, pointing out that this is a *next* draft, not a final draft. Pay close attention to the last two paragraphs, especially the before and after changes in paragraph organization.

   Note the topic sentences the sample writer uses to introduce the final developments of the poem and the ways in which each detail discussed within the paragraph serves as an example of the larger paragraph idea. Challenge students to consider how topic sentences in early paragraphs could be revised to serve the same purpose. In small groups, have students revise another of the paragraphs.

3. After exploring the student sample, have students reflect on the paragraphs they wrote about the Cervantes poem. Have them revise for strong, focused topic sentences and additional evidence before submitting their paragraphs for evaluation. Let students know that in their next explication, more attention will be paid to the role of topic sentences as transitional tools throughout the larger essay and as organizational tools that bring coherency to paragraphs.

Lesson Step 12.4: Selecting a Poem and a Product for the Identity Project

1. Have students find a poem they would like to study, but let students know that in addition to writing an explication, they will select a product to represent the meaning of the poem of their choice. While some students may choose to continue work with the Cervantes poem, others may be interested in making text-to-text connections with another piece that addresses the theme of identity, or perhaps selecting a piece they have already studied. The sky is the limit.

2. After students have had time to complete initial close reading work with their poems, conduct a whole class brainstorming session that begins by asking students to think of ways to represent their understanding of poems in addition to explication. They are to imagine that anything is possible, from a multimedia presentation to a painting. They may use the suggested activities at the end of each lesson as a source of creative writing and performance ideas, but students generally have no difficulty thinking about creative ways to represent ideas on their own.

3. Have students select a product that will spring from their work on the poem of their choice. If multiple students select the same project, allow them to work collaboratively if they choose. For example, if three students want to recite poems about identity, allow them to put the show together as a coherent group, using perhaps a common physical vocabulary, costumes, a thematically significant setting, a title, and other details. Conference with students to be sure that they select texts and projects that can reasonably be executed in the allotted time and can be shared with a public audience in some way.

4. Have students develop a timeline for checking progress on their performance-based assessment products and accompanying explications. Later, develop a timeline for the final show. If you plan to assign a grade, students should collaborate with you to determine the unique evaluation criteria for their piece.

More Poems for Practice

Other poems that explore identity themes: "won't you celebrate with me" by Lucille Clifton, "Part for the Whole" by Robert Francis, "Blood" by Naomi Shihab Nye, "Barbie Doll" by Marge Piercy, "I'm Nobody! Who Are You?" by Emily Dickinson. All of these poems can work on a number of levels and are accessible to most high school readers.

More Close Reading, Performance, and Powerful Writing Ideas

Close Reading

While extensions of this analytical work are endless, a research paper based on an author study or a particular theme, period, or genre is the most natural extension for this work at all levels of readiness. Alternatively, to reinforce the usefulness of these close reading strategies across genres, have students continue to practice applying their textual power (all the close reading strategies they have learned) to short stories, speeches, and newspaper articles.

Performance

Have students practice the close reading and performance strategies they've learned on a play or adapt a longer poem for the stage. Excerpts from a longer piece—*Metamorphosis* by Ovid, *Don Juan* (Canto V) by Lord Byron, and *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge are wonderful longer texts to consider for performance. Collections by an author will work too: Walt Whitman's *Drum Taps* and Gwendolyn Brooks's *A Street in Bronzeville* are ripe for this sort of work.

Artful Writing

Six-line scenes for a brief dramatic dialogue are a great starting point for a young dramatist with newly refined poetic skills. Start with two characters and create a brief scene in six lines. The length of the lines doesn't matter, but the scene cannot be longer than six lines.

Curricular Debate Topic

To be successful and happy in a multicultural America, a person's ethnic identity has to be shed.

Additional Resources for Chapter 4

Verbs and Other Sentence Parts

- Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* is the classic resource for concise and accessible definitions and examples of all aspects of convention in English.
- Online sources such as OWL at Purdue (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/) and many lessons on the ReadWriteThink website (http://www.readwritethink.org/http://www.mozilla.org/thunderbird/) offer helpful lessons and handouts for reviewing grammar and other elements of language.

Academic Arguments, Composition, and Explication

- *They Say/I Say* by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein is an invaluable, concise student textbook that offers templates for academic arguments.
- *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace* by Joseph Williams offers wonderful ideas for writing better sentences and paragraphs, including exercises for students built right into the text.
- *Artful Sentences: Syntax as Style* by Virginia Tufte is a great professional development source for teachers interested in becoming more fluent in discussing verbs and other sentence parts.
- For a definition of an explication and more resources, Duke University provides a concise handout that may be used as a model of the kind of explication assignment one can create. See "Poetry Explication," http://uwp.duke.edu/uploads/assets/poetry.pdf.
- Purdue's Online Writing Lab (OWL) also has useful information regarding explication. See "Writing about Poetry," http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/615/01/.
- *The Explicator* and the large body of work by Helen Vendler, Sven Birkerts, and other explicators and literary critics, such as Stephen Burt and Harold Bloom, are great sources for professional samples.
- "The Tone Map" lesson on the Poetry Out Loud website is wonderful for helping students develop a vocabulary for describing tone. See http://www.poetryoutloud.org/guide/The%20Tone%20Map%5B1%5D.pdf.

More on Curricular Debate

- The National Association for Urban Debate Leagues offers research and resources. See "Resources for Coaches and Debaters," http://www.urbandebate.org/coachanddebater_resources.shtml.

- Gerald Graff has written a number of books about the value of controversy in the classroom, including *Beyond the Culture Wars: How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education* and *Clueless in Academe: How Schooling Obscures the Life of the Mind*.

- Deanna Kuhn's research studies and her book *Education for Thinking* are wonderful professional development resources that explain why and how to use debate to engage students in critical literacy across disciplines.

- George Hillocks Jr. also provides valuable insight in his 2010 article "Teaching Argument for Critical Thinking and Writing: An Introduction."

Poems, Poets, and Poetry

Sir Thomas Wyatt, William Stafford, Walt Whitman, and Lorna Dee Cervantes are all widely anthologized, discussed, and published in a number of online sources.

Multimedia Resources

- "They Flee from Me" by Sir Thomas Wyatt (a recording of the poem), http://www.archive.org/details/audio_poetry_221_2007.

- "Beat! Beat! Drums!" by Walt Whitman (a choral and orchestral interpretation of the poem), http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MhnY_M_K9E&feature=related.

- "Drum-Taps (1865): A Machine Readable Transcription," *Walt Whitman Archive,* http://www.whitmanarchive.org/published/other/DrumTaps.html.

- "Freeway 280" by Lorna Dee Cervantes (a video recording of a reading of the poem), http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AygCcaoMsZc.

Additional Scholarship for Authors Discussed in This Chapter

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Estrin, Barbara L. *Laura: Uncovering Gender and Genre in Wyatt, Donne, and Marvell*. Durham: Duke UP, 1994. Print.

Foley, Stephen Merriam. *Sir Thomas Wyatt*. Boston: Twayne, 1990. Print.

Genoways, Ted. *Walt Whitman and the Civil War: America's Poet during the Lost Years of 1860–1862*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2009. Print.

Greenspan, Ezra. *The Cambridge Companion to Walt Whitman*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995. Print.

Kitchen, Judith. *Understanding William Stafford*. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1989. Print.

Mancuso, Luke. *The Strange Sad War Revolving: Walt Whitman, Reconstruction, and the Emergence of Black Citizenship, 1865–1876*. Columbia: Camden House, 1997. Print.

Miller, F. DeWolfe, ed. *Walt Whitman's* Drum-Taps *and* Sequel to Drum-Taps. Gainesville: Scholar's Facsimiles and Reprints, 1959. Print.

Morris, Roy, Jr. *The Better Angel: Walt Whitman in the Civil War*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. Print.

Pinsker, Sanford. *Three Pacific Northwest Poets: William Stafford, Richard Hugo, and David Wagoner*. Boston: Twayne, 1987. Print.

Stafford, William, and William Heyen. *I Would Also Like to Mention Aluminum: Poems and a Conversation*. Pittsburgh: Slow Loris, 1976. Print.

Whitman, Walt. *The Sacrificial Years: A Chronicle of Walt Whitman's Experiences in the Civil War*. Ed. John Harmon McElroy. Boston: Godine, 1999. Print.

Assessment

■ Wormeli, Rick. *Fair Isn't Always Equal: Assessing and Grading in the Differentiated Classroom*. Portland: Stenhouse, 2006. Print.

360 Degrees of Text

Youth culture is rich with poetry, from song lyrics that teens read, listen to, and write, to poetry they perform through slams and open mics. The rich, compact language of poetry both inside and outside the classroom plays a valuable role in bridging the divide between youth culture and academic culture.

Whether we call it "critical literacy" or just "making meaning," being able to read and analyze with precision and judgment empowers all students, not just in their academic courses but in everyday situations that require thoughtful evaluation and response. Through Eileen Murphy Buckley's 360-degree approach to teaching critical literacy, students investigate texts through a full spectrum of learning modalities, harnessing the excitement of performance, imitation, creative writing, and argument/debate activities to become more powerful thinkers, readers, and writers.

Eileen Murphy Buckley is director of curriculum and instruction for the Office of Autonomously Managed and Performance Schools (AMPS) at Chicago Public Schools. She has taught high school English for more than fifteen years in three high schools, including one she helped found, Walter Payton College Preparatory High School in Chicago. Throughout her career, she has worked closely with national organizations, including the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and Facing History and Ourselves, to increase teacher capacity for teaching critical literacy skills in engaging ways.