

INTRODUCTIONS FOR CLASSICAL POEMS POETRY NIGHT

Now that you have chosen your classical poem, the next step is to write an introduction for it. This introduction must do the following items:

1. Grab the audience's attention.
2. Give the title of your poem and its author.
3. Share the theme of the poem and explain why the poem fits this theme.
4. Introduce you.

Here are some possible introductions:

You're all probably familiar with the line, "he restoreth my soul," from the Twenty-third Psalm. Amid the storm that is everyone's life, there are places, events, activities, or even people who help us to find solitude and restore a sense of balance. My classical selection, which is "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" by William Butler Yeats, describes one man's way of escaping turmoil in his life. It is the place where he goes to restore his soul. I'm Wilhelmina Shakespeare, and tonight I hope to share that same sense of solitude with you via "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" by William Butler Yeats.

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Direct address and use of a quote to get audience's attention

Explanation of theme and how poem fits that theme

Smooth introduction of self

Ending with name of poem and poet

"Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

It may seem that this line is about sundown. But for Irish poet Dylan Thomas, the dying of a day's light was a **metaphor** for his father's long illness and descent into death. How many of you have watched as a brilliant sun slowly turns from bright orange to palest pink, and then slips away into shadow? That's how Thomas felt about his father's life. He wrote the poem "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" as his plea to his father to resist death and to continue to live. Thomas's words remind us all that we should live every minute of every day as fiercely as we can. Sadly, Thomas died just a year after his father. I'm Henry Wadsworth and I choose to honor the cycle of living and dying tonight with "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" by Dylan Thomas.

Lifting of a line from the poem to get audience's attention

Explanation of theme and how poem fits that theme. Note use of **literary terminology!**

Smooth introduction of self

Ending with name of poem and poet

FORMULA FOR WRITING THE INTRODUCTION

1. Attention-getter. Grab your audience's attention with one of the following:

- Ask a question
- Share a quote that connects to the theme
- Share a fact about the author that relates somehow to the poem
- Lift one of the poem's most important lines
- Directly address the audience

2. Explain your theme and how the poem demonstrates this. **Caution:** avoid saying things like "The theme of my poem is solitude, because Yeats was a lonely guy." Your introduction needs to avoid the obvious, which is wording like "the theme of my poem ..." or "my poem is about ..."

Here are some less obvious ways to say that same thing ...

- When I think of [insert your theme], I'm reminded of [explain how poem fits this.]
- [Poet]'s work has a message for us all about [theme]. That message is ... [explain]
- To me, [poet] has captured the idea of [theme] because ...
- The concept behind this poem is [explain].
- When I searched for what this poem meant to me, I discovered ...[explain].

Most of your introduction should focus on explaining the theme and how you snagged this meaning from the poem.

3. The last item in your intro should be a smooth introduction of yourself, the poem, and the poet.

- I'm [your first and last name], and I'm pleased to share [poem by poet] with you tonight.
- I, [your name], will now bring of the words of [poet] to you with [poem].
- I'm [name], and tonight I bring to you the poem [name of poem] by [poet].
- I'm [name], and I'm proud to interpret the work of [poet] by reciting [poem.]

Please note: these introductions will be graded on a 10-point scale.

10: exceeds the expectation. Wow! You knocked it out of the ballpark. The introduction flows well, uses creative and original expression, thoroughly explains the theme and meaning of the poem, and contains all necessary items.

9 – 8: meets the expectation. Nice work. The intro uses ideas from the formula with little originality of the author's own. The explanation of theme/meaning is satisfactory. Intro flows well and has the necessary items.

7: approaches the expectation. The intro relies heavily on phrasing from the formula or may be missing one item, or that item may be out of order. Not enough explanation of theme/meaning may be present. Intro will need to be redone.

6 – 0: falls below the expectation. Specific feedback will be provided and introduction will need to be redone.