

## Writing about Literature — Poetry Explication Problems

1. Use words with precision:  
author ≠ poet, play ≠ poem, simile ≠ metaphor, stanza ≠ paragraph
2. **It's now or never:** The following word confusion is UNACCEPTABLE for college bound seniors. From this point on, if you misuse and/or misspell any of the following words, I'll stop grading your papers and not grade them until the problem is corrected. Note: Your redone paper will go to the bottom of my stack of papers to grade, a zero will be recorded until I have time to grade it, and I will not be sympathetic to your pleas.  
to – too – two  
its – it's  
their – there – they're  
than – then
3. It's no longer merely enough to say, "Here's a simile." College bound seniors need to be able to explain why the poetic elements and figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification, etc.) is present in a work, how it adds to the work's meaning, why the poet/author may have selected those specific words, etc. In an explication, your purpose is to explain the elements to your reader. How does this figurative language and elements reveal the poem's theme, metaphoric and symbolic meanings, or poet's purpose.
4. It's no longer ACCEPTABLE for college bound seniors to misuse literary terminology they should have learned in 9th grade. A simile is NOT a metaphor.
5. When quoting lines, it is permissible to separate the lines with a / instead of writing them exactly as they appear in the poem. This applies to lines from Greek or Shakespearean plays as well.
6. It is no longer ACCEPTABLE to mix 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person pronouns in formal writing. Explications are formal essays and should be written in 3rd person only. Do not do as the following person did:  
"In Claude McKay's "If We Must Die," the speaker (*3rd person*) directs the work and emotion to people just like him. McKay comes across as saying that if we (*1st person*) must die, then it shall not be in vain. You (*2nd person*) must die with your (*2nd person*) pride and honor still intact. This tone (*3rd person*) carries inspiration and pride in a cruel, but useful sense."  
These really insightful sentences are tarnished by the pronoun mismatch. And there are too many of you doing this!

If you can't remember the earlier part of #6, try going back to the middle school rules: NO I, me, my, mine, we, us, our. No YOU, YOUR, YOURS!