

Critique Etiquette and Guidelines

Critique Structure:

- Every written work, every story, every perspective has value. Criticisms should **always begin with talking about the positives**. Hearing what works well in a piece is just as important as hearing what doesn't. **This should be the first topic when discussing with your partners.**
- **Next talk about what didn't work, or what didn't make sense to you.** Accept the pieces for what it is and make suggestions in line with its nature, remember that it isn't your piece. If there is something you don't understand or doesn't seem clear, point it out, and make it clear that you as a reader are confused. **Suggestions aren't imperative**, it's never a "you should", only ideas. It's okay to not have suggestions, when in doubt ask questions.
- **Finish your critique with what it is in the piece you still want to know, what questions it raises.**
- **The author is there to listen**, not to speak, but if there is time the author can respond, asking about their own uncertainties on the piece, bounce ideas off their partner, explaining what their reader might not have caught, or any other thoughts that may have come to mind amid the critique.

Etiquette:

- The author should try to listen and take in their critiques, only responding at the end if there is time.
- Be precise in what you are discussing, be specific and highlight what you are talking about. Vague critiques aren't particularly useful in revision.
- **Be courteous.** Poems are personal, often lived experiences. **The workshop is about building stronger poetry, not attacking weak points.**
- Don't make assumptions about pronouns. I's and are the voice of the speaker in the piece but may not reflect the author. **Always refer to the narrator of any given piece as the speaker, not the author.**
- **Read pieces you are given thoroughly!** Leave no comma unturned, no metaphor unexamined, etc.