

Assignment: Your assignment is to read all of the poems below and write interpretation/thesis statements for **THREE** of them. (You may do more if you want more practice). To make your job easier, you are going to select from the generic sentence frames below. These will provide you with some grammar structures that you will fill in with interpretive details specific to your poem where you see blank lines. You will pick which frame you want to use for each poem, and you may use the same frame for more than one poem if you choose. For the sake of this assignment, we will imagine that your list of devices would come in the following sentence. **This assignment will be turned in on paper and not online.**

Frame A:

__(Author)_____ contrasts the ideas of _____ and _____ observing that _____ and _____.

Frame B:

__(Author)_____ creates a description that is _____ as well as _____ and considers the lasting impact that it has on the speaker's sense of _____ and _____.

Frame C:

__(Author)_____ condemns the attitudes of _____ and _____ forcing the reader to consider _____

Frame D:

__(Author)_____ reflects upon the significance of _____ resulting in a greater understanding of _____ and _____ and the role they play in _____.

Example:

Homage to my hips

these hips are big hips
they need space to
move around in.
they don't fit into little
petty places. these hips
are free hips.
they don't like to be held back.
these hips have never been enslaved,
they go where they want to go
they do what they want to do.
these hips are mighty hips.
these hips are magic hips.
i have known them
to put a spell on a man and
spin him like a top!

Frame D

Clifton reflects upon the significance of her hips and by extension her physical self resulting in a greater understanding of her pride and celebratory attitude and the role they play in the development of a unique and free self-identity that defies societal expectations.

First Fight. Then Fiddle

by Gwendolyn Brooks

First fight. Then fiddle. Ply the slipping string
With feathery sorcery; muzzle the note
With hurting love; the music that they wrote
Bewitch, bewilder. Qualify to sing
Threadwise. Devise no salt, no hempen thing
For the dear instrument to bear. Devote

The bow to silks and honey. Be remote
A while from malice and from murdering.
But first to arms, to armor. Carry hate
In front of you and harmony behind.
Be deaf to music and to beauty blind.
Win war. Rise bloody, maybe not too late
For having first to civilize a space
Wherein to play your violin with grace.

Digging
by Seamus Heaney

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

Under my window, a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
My father, digging. I look down

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging.

The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep
To scatter new potatoes that we picked,
Loving their cool hardness in our hands.

By God, the old man could handle a spade.
Just like his old man.

My grandfather cut more turf in a day
Than any other man on Toner's bog.
Once I carried him milk in a bottle
Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up
To drink it, then fell to right away
Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods
Over his shoulder, going down and down
For the good turf. Digging.

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I've no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.

La Migra

by Pat Mora

Let's play La Migra
I'll be the Border Patrol.
You be the Mexican maid.
I get the badge and sunglasses.
You can hide and run,

but you can't get away
because I have a jeep.
I can take you wherever
I want, but don't ask
questions because
I don't speak Spanish.
I can touch you wherever
I want but don't complain
too much because I've got
boots and kick—if I have to,
and I have handcuffs.
Oh, and a gun.
Get ready, get set, run.

II

Let's play La Migra
You be the Border Patrol.
I'll be the Mexican woman.
Your jeep has a flat,
and you have been spotted
by the sun.
All you have is heavy: hat
glasses, badge, shoes, gun.

I know this desert,
where to rest,
where to drink.
Oh, I am not alone.
You hear us singing
and laughing with the wind,
Agua dulce brota aquí
aquí, aquí,* but since you
can't speak Spanish.
you do not understand
Get ready.

XIV
by Derek Walcott

With the frenzy of an old snake shedding its skin,
the speckled road, scored with ruts, smelling of mold,
twisted on itself and reentered the forest
where the dasheen¹ leaves thicken and folk stories begin.
Sunset would threaten us as we climbed closer
to her house up the asphalt hill road, whose yam vines
wrangled over gutters with the dark reek of moss,
the shutters closing like the eyelids of that mimosa²
called Ti-Marie; then—lucent as paper lanterns,
lamplight glowed through the ribs, house after house—
there was her own lamp at the black twist of the path.
There's childhood, and there's childhood's aftermath.

She began to remember at the minute of the fireflies,
to the sound of pipe water banging in kerosene tins,
stories she told to my brother and myself.
Her leaves were the libraries of the Caribbean.
The luck that was ours, those fragrant origins!
Her head was magnificent, Sidone. In the gully of her voice
shadows stood up and walked, her voice travels my shelves.
She was the lamplight in the stare of two mesmerized boys
still joined in one shadow, indivisible twins.

1 dasheen: tropical plant with large leaves

2 mimosa: tropical plant whose leaves close or droop when touched or shaken

Southern Cop

by Sterling A. Brown

Let us forgive Ty Kendricks.
The place was Darktown. He was young.
His nerves were jittery. The day was hot.
The Negro ran out of the alley.
And so Ty shot.
Let us understand Ty Kendricks.
The Negro must have been dangerous.
Because he ran;
And here was a rookie with a chance
To prove himself a man.
Let us condone Ty Kendricks
If we cannot decorate.

When he found what the Negro was running for,
It was too late;
And all we can say for the Negro is
It was unfortunate.
Let us pity Ty Kendricks.
He has been through enough,
Standing there, his big gun smoking,
Rabbit-scared, alone,
Having to hear the wenches wail
And the dying Negro moan.

The Black Walnut Tree

by Mary Oliver

My mother and I debate:
we could sell
the black walnut tree
to the lumberman,
and pay off the mortgage.
Likely some storm anyway
will churn down its dark boughs,
smashing the house. We talk
slowly, two women trying
in a difficult time to be wise.
Roots in the cellar drains,
I say, and she replies
that the leaves are getting heavier
every year, and the fruit

harder to gather away.

But something brighter than money

moves in our blood—an edge

sharp and quick as a trowel

that wants us to dig and sow.

So we talk, but we don't do

anything. That night I dream

of my fathers out of Bohemia

filling the blue fields

of fresh and generous Ohio

with leaves and vines and orchards.

What my mother and I both know

is that we'd crawl with shame

in the emptiness we'd made

in our own and our fathers' backyard.

So the black walnut tree

swings through another year

of sun and leaping winds,

of leaves and bounding fruit,

and, month after month, the whip-

crack of the mortgage.