Prompt A: Compile at least 3 poems from a 20th century genre and write a comparison/contrast essay about the perspectives depicted in each poem.

Your paper should be 3-5 double spaced **typed** pages. Size 12 font.

Be sure to cite your sources on a separate bibliography page. You should have **at least 2 sources** in your paper.

Consider: How did those poems depict the time period or genre they were written in?

Be sure to support your argument citing specific figures of speech to describe the form of the poems. How does the use of metaphor, simile, metonymy, synecdoche, personification, irony etc. play a larger role in creating the poem’s theme? What about the structure of the poem? Is it free verse or does it follow a predictable pattern? How do the poem’s structures shape the delivery of their content?

Below I have listed possible genres you may choose from. You are welcome to research a different genre, but you should have your choice approved by me before you begin writing. You also may deviate from the list of poets below, I only included some of the more prolific writers but there are many obscure poets who have longed for your insightful essay to address their lack of popularity!

20th Century Poetry Genres

* Beat Poetry: Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, Neil Cassady, Diane di Prima, Anne Waldman, Michael McClure, William S. Burroughs and Jack Kerouac are often best remembered for their works of fiction, but they wrote poetry as well.
* Harlem Renaissance Poetry: Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, James Weldon Johnson, Claude McKay
* Confessionalist Poetry: Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Robert Lowell, Allen Ginsberg
* Imagist Poetry: Ezra Pound, Hilda Doolittle, William Carlos Williams, James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence

If I were you, I would begin by researching some of the poets listed. Which genre speaks to you the most? Is there a particular poem that stirs you?

Choose the genre from which you will write the rest of your essay. Then choose 3 poems from that genre. They should all be from a different poet within that genre. (If you would prefer to write about one poet only then see the other prompt attached.) Then I might make a Venn diagram or columns, any kind of graphic organizer to cite similarities and differences between each poem.

Then I would organize my essay around those contrasts.

Introduction: Briefly give some relevant background information to your reader before stating your thesis. A thesis is simply the claim you intend to support throughout your essay. Here is an example of a good introductory paragraph and thesis:

I. The 1950s are stereotypically represented as a time of conformity and unclouded prosperity—a mixture of Ozzie and Harriet, hula hoops, suburban tract homes, and shopping malls—along with the political anxiety imposed by McCarthyism. During such a period of apparent hegemony, the poets presented in this exhibition became a collective force that stood outside of these larger societal trends. Poets like Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and Diane Di Prima questioned the mainstream politics and culture through the subversive structure of their work and it’s controversial content.

Note: I identify the time period with which they were writing, the 1950’s, and give some brief information about the culture and politics. Then I roadmap my essay by not only introducing the three poets I will be discussing but also saying *how* analyzing their work will provide insight into their influence, *“through the subversive structure of their work and it’s controversial content.”*

II. Paragraph two I might start with discussing the *similarities* between the structures of their poetry and how their styles added to the overall genre of Beat poetry and its effects on society, and even perhaps how society received their style. Who criticized their style? What were they criticized for?

III. Paragraph three I would discuss the *differences* between the structures of their poetry and how their individualized styles added to the meaning of their work outside of the general scope of Beat poetry.

IV. Paragraph four I would discuss how their content was the same.

V. Paragraph five, how their content was different. How was their content received? For instance, Ginsberg was taken to a trial on account of his “obscene” poetry. How would we receive him today? What has changed with our society that we might be more open-minded to now?

VI. Conclusion

You do not have to write 6 paragraphs. You might need to write 8 for what you are talking about, or maybe even only 5. It depends on the organization of your ideas. See me if you need help with this.

Tip: Sometimes it is easier to just start writing before you get stuck on the planning part. Once you see what you want to talk about, you can break it up into parts so that your paper flows from one argument to the next.

Prompt B: In a 3-5 double spaced **typed** essay, discuss the poems of a particular *contemporary* poet. Be sure to mention at least 3 specific poems.

Be sure to cite your sources on a separate bibliography page. You should have **at least 2 sources** in your paper.

How important was the author’s own experiences to the poems they created? Look for ways-large and small in which the speaker reveals aspects of his or her character.

“When writing about voice in poetry, you will often find it illuminating to consider the author’s personal identity. You might consider whether the poem’s subject matter is directly or indirectly shaped by race, gender, age, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, or religious beliefs. If so, how is the viewpoint reflected in the poem’s formal aspects (images, tone, metaphors, and so on)?” –Pearson, Literature Fifth Edition (pg. 624)

How did their generation respond to their work? Did they only become famous later? Why do you think they became famous when they did—what cultural events were happening that might have shaped the relevance of their work?

Be sure to mention specific figures of speech that the poet used (metaphor, simile, metonymy, synecdoche, personification, irony etc.). How do those devices play a larger role in creating the themes the poet expressed? What about the structure of their poetry? Did they prefer to use free verse or sonnets or ballads?

How does their work influence us today?

If I were you I would begin by reading some poetry from contemporary authors.

(Some of my favorites include Billy Collins, Matthew Dickman, Charles Bukowski, Mary Oliver, Gwendolyn Brooks, Langston Hughes, Allen Ginsberg, Marianne Moore and Anne Sexton.)

After I picked the poet whose work inspires me, I would *choose 3 poems that seem to define that author the most*. These may not necessarily be your favorite poems, but I would choose the poems that used the most relevant figures of speech for my claim about this poet. For instance, Robert Frost employs a lot of irony in his poems. I would choose his three most ironic poems and discuss how they added to his work as a whole. I would consider why he chose to use irony as his vehicle of expression. I would also discuss how his personal life was or was not reflected in his poetry, and how society received him then and now. Have things changed? How? Why? Why should we care?

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| CATEGORY | **4 Above Standard** | **3 Meets**  **Standard** | **2  Approaching**  **Standards** | **1 Below Standards** | **0** |
| **Attention Grabber** | The introductory paragraph has a strong hook or attention grabber that is appropriate for the audience. This could be a strong statement, a relevant quotation, statistic, or question addressed to the reader. | The introductory paragraph has a hook or attention grabber, but it is weak, rambling or inappropriate for the audience. | The author has an interesting introductory paragraph but the connection to the topic is not clear. | The introductory paragraph is not interesting AND is not relevant to the topic. | There was no introduction provided. The paper jumps straight into evidence. |
| **Focus or Thesis Statement** | The thesis statement names the topic of the essay and outlines the main points to be discussed. | The thesis statement names the topic of the essay. | The thesis statement outlines some or all of the main points to be discussed but does not name the topic. | The thesis statement does not name the topic AND does not preview what will be discussed. | There is no clear thesis statement. |
| **Support for Position** | Includes 3 or more poems as evidence that support the thesis. The poems relevantly support the thesis statement. | Includes 2 poems that relevantly tie to the thesis. | Includes only 1 poem that relevantly ties to the thesis. | Includes poems that do not relevantly tie to the thesis statement. | Includes no poems as evidence for the thesis statement. |
| **Transitions** | A variety of thoughtful transitions are used. They clearly show how ideas are connected | Transitions show how ideas are connected, but there is little variety | Some transitions work well, but some connections between ideas are fuzzy. | The transitions between ideas are unclear. | There are no evident transitions in this essay. |
| **Sources** | Two or more sources are used for quotes, statistics and facts and are credible and cited correctly. | Two sources are used for quotes, statistics and facts and are credible but are cited incorrectly. | There are less than two credible sources. | There are less than two sources and none are credible. | There are no sources. |
| **Capitalization & Punctuation** | Author makes no errors in capitalization or punctuation, so the essay is exceptionally easy to read. | Author makes 1-2 errors in capitalization or punctuation, but the essay is still easy to read. | Author makes a few errors in capitalization and/or punctuation that catch the reader\'s attention and interrupt the flow. | Author makes several errors in capitalization and/or punctuation that catch the reader\'s attention and interrupt the flow. | The essay is unreadable due to the amount of grammar and spelling errors. |

**Be sure to attach this rubric to your final draft or I will deduct 5 points.**