

Nineteenth Century American Poets – Whitman, Dickinson, Poe

In class, we will break into three groups (a Whitman group, a Dickinson group, and a Poe group). These groups will be responsible for reporting to the class on a brief biography and discussion of “place” or literary importance of their poets.

Then, using textbooks, anthologies or online resources, find and choose one poem by each of our three poets. The members of each group will decide on different poems from the poet that will be reported upon (no repeats within the group) using the expectations below. Each student will begin by reading the poem aloud.

For each of the three poems you choose you will write the following:

- 1) An initial understanding of the poem will be explained (what were your first thoughts? Why did you choose this poem?)
- 2) A deeper understanding of the poem will be explained, including:
 - a) biographical context of the poem (look it up!)
 - b) historical context of the poem (look it up!)
 - c) a connotative exploration of word choice and how meaning is constructed
 - d) an examination of syntax and grammar and how they influence meaning
 - e) a judgment – Good poem? Bad poem? Doggerel? Philosophical? Memorable? Valuable? Instructive?