**Humanities Texas Workshop**

**American Writing on the Civil War**

**Prof. Evan Carton**

 **Civil War Poetry and Poetics**

1. **Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, “Bury Me in a Free Land” (1857)**

Make me a grave where'er you will,

In a lowly plain, or a lofty hill;

Make it among earth's humblest graves,

But not in a land where men are slaves.

I could not rest if around my grave

I heard the steps of a trembling slave;

His shadow above my silent tomb

Would make it a place of fearful gloom.

I could not rest if I heard the tread

Of a coffle gang to the shambles led,

And the mother's shriek of wild despair

Rise like a curse on the trembling air.

I could not sleep if I saw the lash

Drinking her blood at each fearful gash,

And I saw her babes torn from her breast,

Like trembling doves from their parent nest.

I'd shudder and start if I heard the bay

Of bloodhounds seizing their human prey,

And I heard the captive plead in vain

As they bound afresh his galling chain.

If I saw young girls from their mother's arms

Bartered and sold for their youthful charms,

My eye would flash with a mournful flame,

My death-paled cheek grow red with shame.

I would sleep, dear friends, where bloated might

Can rob no man of his dearest right;

My rest shall be calm in any grave

Where none can call his brother a slave.

I ask no monument, proud and high,

To arrest the gaze of the passers-by;

All that my yearning spirit craves,

Is bury me not in a land of slaves.

**2. Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, “To the Cleveland Union-Savers” (1861)**

Men of Cleveland, had a vulture

Sought a timid dove for prey

Would you not, with human pity,

Drive the gory bird away?

Had you seen a feeble lambkin,

Shrinking from a wolf so bold,

Would ye not to shield the trembler,

In your arms have made its fold?

But when she, a hunted sister,

Stretched her hands that ye might save,

Colder far than Zembla's regions,

Was the answer that ye gave.

On the Union's bloody altar,

Was your hapless victim laid;

Mercy, truth, and justice shuddered,

But your hands would give no aid.

And ye sent her back to the torture,

Robbed of freedom and of fright.

Thrust the wretched, captive stranger.

Back to slavery's gloomy night.

Back where brutal men may trample,

On her honor and her fame;

And unto her lips so dusky,

Press the cup of woe and shame.

There is blood upon our city,

Dark and dismal is the stain;

And your hands would fail to cleanse it,

Though Lake Erie ye should drain.

There's a curse upon your Union,

Fearful sounds are in the air;

As if thunderbolts were framing,

Answers to the bondsman's prayer.

Ye may offer human victims,

Like the heathen priests of old;

And may barter manly honor

For the Union and for gold.

But ye can not stay the whirlwind,

When the storm begins to break;

And our God doth rise in judgment,

For the poor and needy's sake.

And, your sin-cursed, guilty Union,

Shall be shaken to its base,

Till ye learn that simple justice,

Is the right of every race.

**3. Henry Timrod, “Ethnogenesis” (1861)**

Written during the meeting of the First Southern Congress at Montgomery, February 1861.

1.

Hath not the morning dawned with added light?

And shall not evening call another star

Out of the infinite regions of the night,

To mark this day in Heaven? At last, we are

A nation among nations; and the world

Shall soon behold in many a distant port

Another flag unfurled!

Now, come what may, whose favor need we court?

And, under God, whose thunder need we fear?

Thank Him who placed us here.

 Beneath so kind a sky -- the very sun

Takes part with us; and on our errands run

All breezes of the ocean; dew and rain

Do noiseless battle for us; and the Year,

 And all the gentle daughters in her train,

 March in our ranks, and in our service wield

Long spears of golden grain!

A yellow blossom as her fairy shield,

June flings her azure banner to the wind,

While in the order of their birth

Her sisters pass, and many an ample field

Grows white beneath their steps, till now, behold,

Its endless sheets unfold.

THE SNOW OF SOUTHERN SUMMERS! Let the earth

Rejoice! beneath those fleeces soft and warm

Our happy land shall sleep

In a repose as deep

As if we lay intrenched behind

Whole leagues of Russian ice and Arctic storm!

2.

And what if, mad with wrongs themselves have wrought,

In their own treachery caught,

By their own fears made bold,

And leagued with him of old,

Who long since in the limits of the North

Set up his evil throne, and warred with God --

What if, both mad and blinded in their rage,

Our foes should fling us down their mortal gage,

And with a hostile step profane our sod!

We shall not shrink, my brothers, but go forth

To meet them, marshaled by the Lord of Hosts,

And overshadowed by the mighty ghosts

Of Moultrie and of Eutaw -- who shall foil

Auxiliars such as these? Nor these alone,

But every stock and stone

Shall help us; but the very soil,

And all the generous wealth it gives to toil,

And all for which we love our noble land,

Shall fight beside, and through us; sea and strand,

The heart of woman, and her hand.

Tree, fruit, and flower, and every influence,

Gentle, or grave, or grand;

The winds in our defence

Shall seem to blow; to us the hills shall lend

Their firmness and their calm;

And in our stiffened sinews we shall blend

The strength of pine and palm.

3.

Nor would we shun the battle-ground,

Though weak as we are strong;

Call up the clashing elements around,

And test the right and wrong!

On one side, creeds that dare to teach

What Christ and Paul refrained to preach;

Codes built upon a broken pledge,

And charity that whets a poniard's edge;

Fair schemes that leave the neighboring poor

To starve and shiver at the schemer's door,

While in the world's most liberal ranks enrolled,

He turns some vast philanthropy to gold;

Religion, taking every mortal form

But that a pure and Christian faith makes warm,

Where not to vile fanatic passion urged,

Or not in vague philosophies submerged,

Repulsive with all Pharisaic leaven,

And making laws to stay the laws of Heaven!

And on the other, scorn of sordid gain,

Unblemished honor, truth without a stain,

Faith, justice, reverence, charitable wealth,

And, for the poor and humble, laws which give,

Not the mean right to buy the right to live,

But life, and home, and health!

To doubt the end were want of trust in God,

Who, if he has decreed

That we must pass a redder sea

Than that which rang to Miriam's holy glee,

Will surely raise at need

A Moses with his rod!

4.

But let our fears -- if fears we have -- be still,

And turn us to the future! Could we climb

Some mighty Alp, and view the coming time,

The rapturous sight would fill

Our eyes with happy tears!

Not only for the glories which the years

Shall bring us; not for lands from sea to sea,

And wealth, and power, and peace, though these shall be;

But for the distant peoples we shall bless,

And the hushed murmurs of a world's distress:

For, to give labor to the poor,

The whole sad planet o'er,

And save from want and crime the humblest door,

Is one among the many ends for which

God makes us great and rich!

The hour perchance is not yet wholly ripe

When all shall own it, but the type

Whereby we shall be known in every land

Is that vast gulf which lips our Southern strand,

And through the cold, untempered ocean pours

Its genial streams, that far off Arctic shores

May sometimes catch upon the softened breeze

Strange tropic warmth and hints of summer seas.

**4. Julia Ward Howe, “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” (1861)**

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;

He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;

He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword:

His truth is marching on.

[Glory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glory_%28religion%29), glory, [hallelujah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hallelujah)!

Glory, glory, hallelujah!

Glory, glory, hallelujah!

His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps,

They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;

I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps:

His day is marching on.

Glory, glory, hallelujah!

Glory, glory, hallelujah!

Glory, glory, hallelujah!

His day is marching on.

I have read a fiery [gospel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel) writ in burnished rows of steel:

"As ye deal with my contemners, so with you my grace shall deal;

Let the Hero, born of woman, crush [the serpent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serpent_%28Bible%29) with his heel,

Since God is marching on.

Glory, glory, hallelujah!

Glory, glory, hallelujah!

Glory, glory, hallelujah!

Since God is marching on.

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;

He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment-seat:

Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet!

Our God is marching on.

Glory, glory, hallelujah!

Glory, glory, hallelujah!

Glory, glory, hallelujah!

Our God is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies [Christ](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ) was born across the sea,

With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me.

As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,

While God is marching on.

Glory, glory, hallelujah!

Glory, glory, hallelujah!

Glory, glory, hallelujah!

While God is marching on.

**5. Emily Dickinson, “My Portion is Defeat—today— ” (1862)**

My Portion is Defeat—today—

A paler luck than Victory—

Less Paeans—fewer Bells—

The Drums don't follow Me—with tunes—

Defeat—a somewhat slower—means—

More Arduous than Balls—

'Tis populous with Bone and stain—

And Men too straight to stoop again—,

And Piles of solid Moan—

And Chips of Blank—in Boyish Eyes—

And scraps of Prayer— And Death's surprise,

Stamped visible—in Stone—

There's somewhat prouder, over there—

The Trumpets tell it to the Air—

How different Victory

To Him who has it—and the One

Who to have had it, would have been

Contenteder—to die—

**6. Emily Dickinson, “Color -- Caste -- Denomination -- ” (1864)**

Color - Caste - Denomination -

These - are Time's Affair -

Death's diviner Classifying

Does not know they are -

As in sleep - all Hue forgotten -

Tenets - put behind -

Death's large - Democratic fingers

Rub away the Brand -

If Circassian - He is careless -

If He put away

Chrysalis of Blonde - or Umber -

Equal Butterfly -

They emerge from His Obscuring -

What Death - knows so well -

Our minuter intuitions -

Deem unplausible -

**7. Herman Melville, “Shiloh” (1865)**

A Requiem.

Skimming lightly, wheeling still,

  The swallows fly low

Over the field in clouded days,

  The forest-field of Shiloh—

Over the field where April rain

Solaced the parched ones stretched in pain

Through the pause of night

That followed the Sunday fight

  Around the church of Shiloh—

The church so lone, the log-built one,

That echoed to many a parting groan

    And natural prayer

Of dying foemen mingled there—

Foemen at morn, but friends at eve—

  Fame or country least their care:

(What like a bullet can undeceive!)

  But now they lie low,

While over them the swallows skim,

  And all is hushed at Shiloh.

**8. Herman Melville, “A Utilitarian View of the Monitors Fight” (1865)**

Plain be the phrase, yet apt the verse,

  More ponderous than nimble;

For since grimed War here laid aside

His Orient pomp, 'twould ill befit

    Overmuch to ply

The Rhyme's barbaric cymbal.

Hail to victory without the gaud

  Of glory; zeal that needs no fans

Of banners; plain mechanic power

Plied cogently in War now placed—

    Where War belongs—

Among the trades and artisans.

Yet this was battle, and intense—

  Beyond the strife of fleets heroic;

Deadlier, closer, calm 'mid storm;

No passion; all went on by crank,

    Pivot, and screw,

And calculations of caloric.

Needless to dwell; the story's known.

  the ringing of those plates on plates

Still ringeth round the world—

The clangor of that blacksmith's fray.

    The anvil-din

Resounds this message from the Fates:

War shall yet be, and to the end;

  But war-paint shows the streaks of weather;

War yet shall be, but warriors

Are now but operatives; War's made

    Less grand than Peace,

And a singe runs through lace and feather.

**9. Walt Whitman, “Spirit Whose Work is Done” (1865)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| SPIRIT whose work is done! spirit of dreadful hours! |   |
| Ere, departing, fade from my eyes your forests of bayonets; |   |
| Spirit of gloomiest fears and doubts, (yet onward ever unfaltering pressing;) |   |
| Spirit of many a solemn day, and many a savage scene! Electric spirit! |   |
| That with muttering voice, through the [war](http://www.bartleby.com/142/1013.html#138.5) now closed, like a tireless phantom flitted, | *5* |
| Rousing the land with breath of flame, while you beat and beat the drum; |   |
| —Now, as the sound of the drum, hollow and harsh to the last, reverberates round me; |   |
| As your ranks, your immortal ranks, return, return from the battles; |   |
| While the muskets of the young men yet lean over their shoulders; |   |
| While I look on the bayonets bristling over their shoulders; | *10* |
| While those slanted bayonets, whole forests of them, appearing in the distance, approach and pass on, returning homeward, |   |
| Moving with steady motion, swaying to and fro, to the right and left, |   |
| Evenly, lightly rising and falling, as the steps keep time; |   |
| —Spirit of hours I knew, all hectic red one day, but pale as death next day; |   |
| Touch my mouth, ere you depart—press my lips close! | *15* |
| Leave me your pulses of rage! bequeath them to me! fill me with currents convulsive! |   |
| Let them scorch and blister out of my chants, when you are gone; |   |
| Let them identify you to the future, in these songs. |  |

**A ‘Poetry-Fueled War’**

During the Civil War, poetry didn’t just respond to events; it shaped them.

BY [RUTH GRAHAM](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/ruth-graham)

When Edmund Wilson dismissed the poetry of the Civil War as “versified journalism” in 1962, he summed up a common set of critiques: American poetry of the era is mostly nationalist doggerel, with little in the way of formal innovation. On the contrary, argues scholar Faith Barrett. In her new book, [*To Fight Aloud Is Very Brave*,](http://www.umass.edu/umpress/title/fight-aloud-very-brave) Barrett contends that a broad range of 19th-century writers used verse during the Civil War to negotiate complicated territory, both personal and public. Taking its title from a [poem by Emily Dickinson](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/244782), Barrett’s book also argues that Civil War poetry was much more formally destabilizing than scholars have traditionally acknowledged.

The book explores work by Northern writers such as [Emily Dickinson](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/emily-dickinson), [Walt Whitman](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/walt-whitman), and black abolitionist poet [Frances Ellen Watkins Harper](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/frances-ellen-watkins-harper), along with amateur “soldier-poets” and several Southern poets, including the so-called poet laureate of the Confederacy, [Henry Timrod](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/henry-timrod). Barrett devotes a chapter to [Herman Melville](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/herman-melville)’s little-read postwar collection *Battle-Pieces*, and another to the close connection between poetry and songs during the war.

Barrett co-edited a 2005 anthology of Civil War poetry called *Words for the Hour*, and her own published poetry includes a 2001 chapbook, *Invisible Axis*. She spoke with the Poetry Foundation from Appleton, Wisconsin, where she teaches English and creative writing at Lawrence University.

**You write that the Civil War was a “poetry-fueled war.” What do you mean by that?**

Poetry in mid-19th-century America was ubiquitous in a way that it just isn’t now. It was everywhere in newspapers and magazines, children were learning it in school…. Americans were encountering poetry on a weekly basis, if not a daily basis, in the Civil War era, and that’s a profound difference from contemporary poetry and its place in our culture.

There are so many accounts in newspapers of soldiers dying with a poem in their pockets, poems written on a scrap of paper folded up inside a book; so many accounts of songs or poems being sung or read to political leaders at particular moments. For example, after [Lincoln](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/abraham-lincoln) announced the second call for a draft ... [James Sloan Gibbons](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/james-sloan-gibbons) wrote this song poem called “[Three Hundred Thousand More](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/244784),” which he supposedly sang to Lincoln in his office one day. So there’s a kind of immediacy of impact, that poetry is actually, I suggest, shaping events, not just responding or reflecting on them.

**How did these poems reach the general public? They must have traveled somewhat quickly since they’re responding to political events.**

The technological development of the railroad and then also the increasingly affordable technologies of printing and reproduction had the result of dramatically increasing the speed with which poetry could move around. ... *Harper’s [Weekly]* featured poetry pretty regularly. It’s the equivalent of readers seeing poetry in a magazine like *Newsweek* or *Time,* or maybe even *People* magazine. ... Then also it’s a shorter genre, it can be more quickly written; it can be written in response to immediate events…*.*

**You say that it’s hard to find poetry arguing against the war; why?**

There was very strong support for the war from both North and South. ... You do see, starting in 1863 and of course continuing through the last year and a half of the war, poems where people register horror and shock at the vast numbers of soldiers that are dying. Dickinson and Melville both register that shock in their poetry. But writers who were well known didn’t want to attach their names to work that was anti-war.

**If we think of “Civil War poetry” as a genre, what did it look like formally?**

There’s a lot of variety and a lot of range. One of the reasons why this body of work has been neglected by scholars until fairly recently is there was this assumption that the work is all formally so regular as to be monotonous: singsong, rocking-horse rhythms. Regularity of meter makes this work more difficult for us to approach.

But one thing I’ve noticed in my years of working on Civil War poetry is that there’s just phenomenal formal range. There’s lots of experimentation; there’s lots of variety in terms of the formal commitments the poets are working with. So you have lots of ballads, not surprisingly, lots of story poems, poems written with traditional commitments to the ballad form, and also elegies. You have poets experimenting with pushing beyond rhythmic and metrical patterns that are formal. ... I would actually say that maybe half the poets writing in this era are doing interesting and unexpected things with form even though they’re not yet writing free verse.

My friend and coeditor [of *Words for the Hour*] Cristanne Miller has a wonderful new book called *Reading in Time* that analyzes Dickinson’s formal commitments by resituating Dickinson in her 19th-century context. Cris argues very persuasively that there’s far more formal experimentation happening in mid-19th-century poetry than we have previously acknowledged. … Cris cites [Longfellow](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/henry-wadsworth-longfellow) as one of the great formal innovators of this period, and in addition to Longfellow, I would also mention [John Greenleaf] [Whittier](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/john-greenleaf-whittier), [Herman Melville](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/herman-melville), [George Moses Horton](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/george-moses-horton), [George Henry Boker](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/george-henry-boker), [Lucy Larcom](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/lucy-larcom), and [Ethelinda Beers](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/ethel-lynn-beers). These are all poets who are writing rhymed, metrical verse, but who are experimenting within that framework.

**Do you see wildly different things coming from Northern and Southern poets?**

The similarities between Northern and Southern poems far outweigh the differences. ... Both sides are arguing that God is on their side. Both sides—and this is particularly startling to us as 21st-century readers—are arguing they’re fighting for independence, although obviously they’re using that word quite differently with quite different meanings.

**You write that popular song and poetry became closely connected in a new way during the war years. Are poets writing specifically with the idea that their poems would quickly be turned into songs?**

It goes both ways. In some cases you have composers taking up poems and saying, “I like this a lot—let me set it to music.” And then in other cases, as in [Julia Ward Howe](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/julia-ward-howe)’s case [with “[The Battle Hymn of the Republic](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173685)”], you have a poet saying, “This ‘John Brown’s Body,’ that’s an interesting poem. Let me see if I could do a different kind of approach to it in my lyrics.” And it’s clear that Howe hoped that her lyrics would be sung, but also that she intended to circulate it as a poem. So its first appearance is in the *Atlantic Monthly*, where it appears on the page as a poem, but then it’s quickly put into sheet music so people can play it at home and soldiers can sing it.

**“The Battle Hymn of the Republic” is such a fascinating case, because it’s still ubiquitous. How did that particular poem become the most lasting anthem of the Civil War?**

Yes, it still has this huge cultural pull. Think about all the ceremonies after 9/11 where “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” was performed. It’s a song that has extraordinary cultural staying power. ...

First of all, the song that she’s imitating, “John Brown’s Body,” is a very interesting song in which you have soldiers basically performing their bravado about how many of them will die in battle, and that’s all right. So the refrain of that song is “John Brown’s body lies a-mouldering in the grave, but his soul goes marching on.”

So it’s a very typical kind of marching song for soldiers, saying, “Many of us are going to die, and we don’t care!” Howe takes that tune and lifts the lyrics up to a more lofty, less graphic tone. ... [But] the overwhelming argument of that song, verse after verse, is that God supports our violent actions. That’s why I find it so deeply disturbing culturally that it’s in such wide use now.

**You’ve talked about how lots of Civil War poetry is unfairly dismissed as overly conventional, but in contrast to that, you actually see Emily Dickinson as more traditional in some ways than her critical reputation suggests. Can you explain that?**

The first scholars to approach Dickinson potentially as being a war poet—I’m thinking of the ’80s and ’90s—tended to read Dickinson as a poet who’s deeply skeptical about nationalistic ideologies and deeply skeptical about the rise of militarism and patriotic rhetoric in the Union. ... I’m of the opinion that she does both things: that she thinks skeptically and quizzically about the war, the nationalist rhetoric and patriotic fervor that sort of drove the nation to war; but I think she also writes poems of grief and mourning that suggest that death in battlefield is a noble and good thing. In this sense I think she really belongs to her community of Amherst. She writes to and from that community, and these poems of grief and mourning that are supposed to offer consolation to herself, to her family, to others, not surprisingly share in some of the sentiments of that community. But it’s an unusual reading of Dickinson to suggest she’s participating in that kind of sentimental rhetoric.

**Dickinson and Whitman are sometimes taken as the only “interesting” poets of the war years. Is the broad range of Civil War poetry underappreciated by contemporary scholars?**

Edmund Wilson was very influential in dismissing this work as “versified journalism.” ... It’s also the case that scholars were reluctant to approach this body of work because the “But is it any good?” question persists much more strongly with poetry than it does with prose texts. If we pick up the dime novels that were written in the Civil War era, the political thrillers about female spies, we don’t expect those works to have the kind of narrative or linguistic complexity of *Moby-Dick*, but we still find them interesting and worthy of study.

**You propose that mid-19th-century poets—beyond Dickinson and Whitman—influenced modernist preferences for things like skepticism, introspection, and fragmentation. But that influence, too, has gone mostly unacknowledged.**

Another feature of Civil War–era poetry that has made scholars very uncomfortable in approaching it is all those national commitments writ large in the poetry. The fact that people took up their cause and proclaimed for it is something that has made critical approaches to the work more challenging, more difficult. . . . Undergraduates often find it very moving and powerful. They don’t have the whole trained scholarly apparatus to think, “Well, this is boring and uninteresting because of its formal regularity.” Instead, they read the poems on their own terms on the page and still find a kind of power in them that 19th-century readers found in them.

**The 5-step CRIT** (**C**lose **R**eading **I**nterpretive **T**ool) **Process.**

1. **Paraphrase**
2. **Observe**
3. **Contextualize**
4. **Analyze**
5. **Argue**

**1.Paraphrase**: In your own words, give as accurate a summary as you can of what the poem says.

2. **Observe**: Identify and list the features or qualities of the poem’s language that catch your attention and that you think may be important to understanding what the poem means. Respond to this prompt by stating each of your observations in one short sentence that ends with the phrase “is potentially significant.” *[For example: if the poem were “Mary Had a Little Lamb,” one sentence in your list of four observations might read: “The description of the lamb’s fleece as ‘white as snow’ is potentially significant.”]* Your list may include any kind of elements that you think may be significant: descriptive details; structural and stylistic patterns; arrangements of words; changes in the poem’s vocabulary, rhythm, or tone; evocative images or metaphors; repetitions of phrases, sounds, or ideas.

3. **Contextualize:** List any facts that you may know about the social, historical, literary historical, and/or biographical context or circumstances in which the poem was written that you think may be important to understanding what the poem means. Respond to this prompt by stating each of your observations in one short sentence that ends with the phrase “is potentially significant.”

4. **Analyze**: Select several of the observations you have listed in response to the “Observe” and “Contextualize” prompts (steps two and three above) and state in one or two sentences for each of the textual or contextual features you have selected why that feature or fact is significant, how it contributes to an understanding or interpretation of what the poem means. Respond to this prompt by listing the textual feature or contextual fact you are analyzing and starting your analysis of its significance with the phrase ”This detail is significant because . . . “ [*For example: “The description of the lamb’s fleece as ‘white as snow’: This detail is significant because it does not just describe the color of the lamb’s wool but communicates the lamb’s purity and innocence, since the phrase ‘white as snow’ is conventionally associated with those qualities.]*

5. **Argue:** Based on your work of observation and analysis in the preceding steps, write one paragraph (4 or 5 sentences) on the poem that conveys your interpretation of the poem’s meaning and purpose. State the main thesis of your interpretation--the central claim you are arguing for--and support that thesis by presenting the evidence for it that you have gathered in steps two through four. Your paragraph may include some of the same analytical sentences you wrote in response to the “Analyze” prompt, but whether you re-use these exact sentences or not, the observations and analyses that you present in this paragraph should all support the argument you’re making.