

Performance Task: Literary Analysis and Original Poem

Description:

In *Red, White & Whole*, Rajani LaRocca uses imagery and symbolism to carry the weight of things that are hard to name: the pull between two cultures, the fear of losing someone you love, the question of where you belong. In this Performance Task, you will do two things: analyze how one of LaRocca's poems "works" and then step into the role of poet yourself.

First, you will write a multi-paragraph literary analysis essay explaining how one of LaRocca's poems uses either imagery or symbolism to reveal something meaningful. Choose one: a specific image and what it makes you see, feel, or understand; or, a symbol and what it represents beyond itself. Either way, your job is not simply to identify what the image or symbol is. Your job is to explain what it does, how it works, and what it reveals.

Then, you will write a short original poem about a connection in your own life, built around either a specific sensory image or a symbol that speaks to your experience. Your poem must also use at least one craft move you learned about from the unit. You will close with a brief author's note: not a summary of your poem, but a window into your thinking as a writer. What drew you to the image or symbol you chose? What in this unit inspired your choice, and what did you want it to mean?

Why This Task Matters:

Every writer (including *you*) makes choices about how to say something hard. LaRocca didn't write "Reha feels like she lives between two cultures" or "Reha is scared her mother will die." She found images and symbols that could convey those feelings and let readers experience them too. When you analyze how her language works and then try it in your own poem, you are learning something that matters beyond this class: that language is not just a way to report what happened, but a way to make someone else feel what it was like to be there.

Criteria for Success:

- a clear thesis that argues (not just identifies) how a specific image or symbol reveals something meaningful in the poem
- textual evidence drawn accurately from the poem, paired with commentary that explains what the imagery or symbolism reveals, not just restating or paraphrasing the line
- an essay that is logically organized and easy to follow, with transitions that guide the reader through the analysis
- an original poem built around a specific sensory image or symbol that does real work in the poem, one that is particular to you and earns its place by carrying meaning

- at least one craft move from the unit used purposefully in the original poem (e.g., line breaks, repetition, juxtaposition, word choice)
- an author's note that opens a window into your thinking as a writer: what drew you to your image or symbol, what in this unit sparked it, and what you wanted it to mean
- active participation in the poetry sharing, including deliberate choices about pacing and emphasis during recitation, attentive listening, and thoughtful responses to peers' poems

Performance Task Rubric: Literary Analysis and Original Poem

Use this rubric to check your work before you submit. Ask yourself: does my work meet the Proficient description in every row?

Criteria	1 — Beginning	2 — Developing	3 — Proficient
Thesis & Literary Analysis RL.7.2, RL.7.4, RL.7.5, W.7.2, W.7.9	Does not include a clear thesis, or the thesis only names an image or symbol without explaining what it does. Commentary is missing or simply restates lines from the poem.	Includes a thesis about imagery or symbolism but it is vague or incomplete. Some evidence is present but commentary mostly paraphrases the poem rather than explaining what the image or symbol reveals.	Includes a clear, specific thesis that argues how an image or symbol reveals something meaningful in the poem. Text evidence is accurate and paired with commentary that explains what the imagery or symbolism reveals, not just what it is.
Organization & Transitions W.7.2, W.7.4	The essay lacks clear organization. Ideas are difficult to follow and transitions between them are missing or confusing.	The essay is mostly organized but some transitions between ideas are weak or unclear. The structure could be more cohesive.	The essay is logically organized and easy to follow. Clear transitions guide the reader through the analysis from thesis to evidence to commentary.
Original Poem W.7.3, W.7.4, RL.7.4, RL.7.5	The poem does not include a recognizable image or symbol, or the image is generic and does not do meaningful work. No craft move from the unit is evident.	The poem includes an image or symbol but it may be general rather than specific to the writer. A craft move is attempted but may not be used effectively.	The poem is built around a specific sensory image or symbol that is particular to the writer and earns its place by carrying meaning. At least one craft move from the unit (e.g., line breaks, repetition, juxtaposition, word choice) is used purposefully.
Author's Note W.7.5, W.7.9	The author's note is missing, or it only summarizes the poem without reflecting on any craft choices.	The author's note identifies a craft choice but the reflection is vague. It describes what the writer did rather than explaining the thinking behind it.	The author's note opens a window into the writer's thinking: it explains what image or symbol was chosen, what in the unit sparked it, and what the writer wanted it to mean.
Language & Conventions	Contains frequent errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation,	Contains some errors in grammar, spelling,	Demonstrates command of standard English

Criteria	1 — Beginning	2 — Developing	3 — Proficient
<i>L.7.1, L.7.1.c, L.7.2, L.7.3, L.7.3.a</i>	or modifier placement that interfere with understanding. Language is vague or wordy throughout.	punctuation, or modifier placement that occasionally interfere with clarity. Language is mostly appropriate but sometimes imprecise or redundant.	conventions. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation are correct throughout. Phrases and clauses are correctly placed. Language is precise and concise.
Presentation & Discussion <i>SL.7.1, SL.7.4</i>	Does not recite the poem or read the author’s note aloud, or participation in discussion is off-topic, unclear, or disrespectful.	Recites the poem and reads the author’s note but delivery lacks deliberate pacing or emphasis. Participates in discussion with some relevant contributions but may not listen attentively or respond thoughtfully to peers.	Recites the poem with deliberate choices about pacing and emphasis that bring its meaning across. Reads the author’s note clearly. Actively participates in discussion with attentive listening and thoughtful responses to peers’ poems.