

Poetry Workshop Ground Rules

The bottom line is **Does the poem work?** Does it use words sparingly and precisely; provide a fresh look at something; have good sound, rhythm, and tempo; include engaging images; present interesting juxtapositions?

Some criteria to consider in critiquing a poem:

Mechanics: uses metaphor & imagery, exhibits concision & wholeness, has good sound, rhythm, & tempo

Depth of Feeling: is unique, creative, passionate, inspirational, fresh, thoughtful

Overall Impact: is engaging, interesting, stimulating, captivating, compelling

Talk about which of these criteria are especially strong in the poem, and which could be improved. Tell how the poem affects you. Whether it moves you. Look at the poem's internal structure. Is it solid? Say what you think the poet is trying to accomplish, and whether the poet has been successful. **State your considerations, and the reasons for making them.** Do not argue. The goal of workshopping is not to reach consensus but to express and explore different perspectives.

Poet

- 1. Do not introduce your poem**
Let it stand on its own
- 2. If you do not want feedback, tell us**
It's OK to simply read your poem
- 3. Do not defend your poem**
Following the critique, if you wish, briefly explain why you did what you did
- 4. Do not argue with the critic**
The critic is offering considerations based upon what the poem evoked for him/her

Critic

- 1. Focus on the poem not the poet**
Check your prejudices, philosophies, politics at the door
- 2. Refrain from personal attacks**
Focus on the ideas evoked by the poem
- 3. Critique the poem neutrally**
Discuss the poem in terms of technique not taste
- 4. Support your critique**
Tell why you think the poem works or doesn't
- 5. Balance your critique between what works and what doesn't**
Look for the positive as well as the negative
- 6. Do not ramble or digress**
Stay focused on critiquing the poem
- 7. Do not critique a critique**
Respect the opinions of others; provide your own perspective
- 8. Do not rewrite the poem in your style**
Provide considerations, not rewrites
- 9. Be aware of your body language and nonverbal responses**
Know that they can be as inappropriate as words
- 10. Do not persist in picking nits**
If the poet doesn't seem to be getting your point, drop it