

## Interview with a Vampire?

*No, not this time, but just as exciting. You may, however, interview a hawk, a snowman, an onion, a murderous duke, or even someone terrified by a fork—  
a fork for crying out loud!*

**Short Essay #1** (3-4 pages): For your first formal assignment of the semester you will interview the speaker of one poem that you may choose from the list below. Your job of course is to entertain and inform your readers just like journalists for Rolling Stone magazine do, and just like those journalists—despite their involvement with that crazy world of drugs, rock and roll, and . . . what was the other one?—your job is to be professional. Remember that you are an expert in your field having studied poetry intensely now for three weeks, so you know the right questions to ask, how to disarm them with the easy questions early on and, when you have them warmed up to you and the subject, how to tease out of them answers to more difficult but far more interesting questions.

One of Heaney's poems (handouts)

“Luke Havergal” by Edwin Arlington Robinson (26)

“Monologue for an Onion” by Suji Kwok Kim (28)

“The Snow Man” by Wallace Stevens (236)

“Hawk Roosting” by Ted Hughes (27)

“The Lake Isle of Innisfree” by William Butler Yeats (7)

“Out, Out—” by Robert Frost (12)

“My Last Duchess” by Robert Browning (14)

“Dakota: October, 1822: Hunkpapa Warrior” by Rod Taylor (36)

“Fork” by Charles Simic (89)

“White Lies” by Natasha Trethewey

**Reminders:** Design your entry-level questions to lead up to the big questions. As we have discussed in class, what poetic devices contribute directly to the theme?

Design the big questions to allow the interviewee room to think about it and answer in an honest and genuine way. In other words, try not to make him/her/it feel trapped like there is only one way to answer.

Keep in mind that easy answers to difficult questions are always suspect to intelligent readers, especially when it sounds like you are claiming there is only one right answer. Furthermore, because of ambiguity particularly in poetry, possibilities and suggestions and impressions are far more believable and rewarding.

Do preliminary research by checking out a couple of Rolling Stone interviews. It will be even more helpful if they are interviews of your favorite artists.

Do not do preliminary research by checking out what people on the internet have to say about your poem. That will not help but only hinder your ability to produce a fresh, creative and intelligent paper that is yours and yours only. Many “analysis/interpretations” on the internet are

ill-informed, superficial, unimaginative and lifeless. Own that bad boy is what I am trying to tell you, and give your reader the opposite of Sparknotes to read.

Finally, choose a poem you feel close to in order to write a stronger paper. Which poem says something you have thought before, wish you had said yourself, or never imagined could be said this way yet are in awe of what this poet has shared with you? My course introduction in the syllabus may offer you some idea of what value I believe we get from poetry, and perhaps there you can get some idea of what important questions to ask about your chosen poem. Other helpful questions can be found at the ends of chapters 1, 2, 5, and 12 and in your notes from class discussions.

**See section 1 schedule for due dates.**