

On Critiquing

1. Does the poem move in interesting, discernible units? Or is it not yet “shaped”?
2. Do the poem’s sounds strengthen the meaning? Are those sounds pleasing? Or are they used for their own sake and thus seem to get in the way?
3. Does the poem use tired or energetic words? Are you interested in the language? What kind of language is used?
4. Can you predict the outcome of the poem (ie: is it a cliché?)
5. Are the images clear, interesting, related in a helpful and fresh way?
6. Does the place of the poem carry the reader too quickly or too slowly? Does it meander too much or not enough?
7. Do generalization/ideas/feelings grow out of the experience of the poem or do they seem imposed (simple “told” or “concluded”)?
8. Is the poet’s tone appropriate to the situation of the poem? Is the tone complex enough or is it one-dimensional?
9. Would the poem be better shorter? Does every word count? What is extraneous?
10. Can you as the reader find a strong impulse, a need behind the poem or are the words skillfully arranged to give the impression of an importation emotion?
11. Is there a clear “voice” here or does it seem generic?
12. Does the poem give you the sense it could be figured out even if it’s not completely intelligible at first? Is it memorable?

More advanced questions to ask:

13. Is the poem comparable to the poet’s best work?
14. Do echoes/influences/styles of other poets override the poet’s voice or become too evident?