

Teaching the Lesson

Analyzing a Student Model

Interpretation of “The World Is Not a Pleasant Place to Be”

The student model is an interpretation of the poem “The World Is Not a Pleasant Place to Be” by Nikki Giovanni. The writer presents her view of the poem’s message and then supports her interpretation with an analysis of the lines, metaphors, and symbols in each of the poem’s four stanzas.

Have a volunteer read the model out loud, and discuss the Rubric in Action with students. Point out the key words that correspond to the elements mentioned in the Rubric in Action.

- 1 Ask students why it is important to include the statement of interpretation in the introduction.

Possible Response: The statement helps to organize the essay and allows the reader to see how the details support the interpretation.

- 2 Ask students what the stanza-by-stanza method of organizing allows the writer to include in each paragraph.

Possible Response: It allows the writer to include direct quotations, analysis of the lines, symbols, metaphors, and personal reactions to images.

- 3 Remind students to include examples from the text to support their interpretation of the metaphor. Students might benefit from sharing their interpretation in a small group setting, where the members take turns listening critically and providing each other with useful feedback.

- 4 Remind students that the reader of the essay may not have read the poem or have a copy available for reference. Including direct quotations gives the reader enough information about the poem to understand the interpretation and exposes the reader to the poet’s style.

- 5 Ask students what details the writer uses from the poem to support her interpretation.

Possible Response: The image of the ocean and clouds and the examination of the relationship that exists between them support the writer’s interpretation of the stanza’s meaning.

6 Have students notice that the writer shows the relevance of the theme of the poem for all readers and restates the main idea in different words. Ask students for other ways in which the writer could have ended her discussion.

Possible Response: The writer could have ended her discussion with a quote from the poet about why she wrote this poem, or an incident from the writer's life that reveals the truth of the theme she has drawn from the poem.