

ENGL 286
Poetry
Dr. Hammond
Spring 2009
Project 3

Edited Anthology

The final major project for ENGL 286 will be to create an anthology of poetry on a theme of the student's choosing.

Your anthology must include the following:

- a title page with a creative title that also lists your name as the editor
- a table of contents page, listing poem, author, and page number
- a critical introduction (approximately six typewritten double-spaced pages) that connects the poems thematically and provides a discussion of each individual poem
- at least ten poems, but no more than fifteen
- a primary works cited page, listing full publication information for each poem

Criteria for selecting poems

- Your poems must be published poems by serious poets. You may not collect poems you have written, or those of your friends. You also should avoid amateur poetry sites. If you are unsure if the poems are of a suitably literary quality, consult me.
- Your poems may not be selected from the same book or website. You may choose no more than two works from a single collection.
- Your poems must be written by different authors. You may include no more than two poems by the same author.

Choosing a topic

You may wish to start by looking for poems with a general theme: love poems, poems about children, elegies. It's better to start out generally, so that you have a good chance of finding many appropriate poems to choose from. Once you have collected several, though, start thinking about how the poems connect in more specific ways. Instead of poems just about love in general, for example, are you interested in finding poems about first loves, or poems about the endings of relationships? Both types fall into the general category of love poetry, as do anniversary poems, but these are obviously very different. You may want to collect only the first love poems, or you may want to divide your anthology into two sections (I would not recommend more than two sections). The strongest anthologies will be those in which the poems have a clear connection to each other, not just poems that appear randomly stuck together.

- If you're not sure what sort of theme you're interested in, just start reading. Using your book and the poetry resources listed below, read several poems at a time until you start to see something you're interested in. Remember that the topics for the anthology don't

need to be something obviously poetic like love. Think about poems about art, poems about school or memory or gardening. For that matter, I've seen enough poems about tomatoes to easily make a good collection.

- But be careful not to choose a topic so specialized that you may have difficulty locating poems. For example, while looking for poems for my own collection, I ran across two this week about people dealing with animals hit and left dead or dying on the road, including William Stafford's lovely and terrible "Traveling Through the Dark." With world enough and time, you could locate enough poems for such a subject, but for the moment, you'd be better off broadening your topic to something more manageable—poems about our relationship to animals, perhaps?
- Try to represent at least a couple of time periods in your selections. Many of you will probably be looking at contemporary poems, but adding a classic poem into the selection as well add depth to your work.
- Most importantly, choose poems you enjoy. You will spend several weeks working with the poems and writing about them, so you want to find work you're comfortable with.

Locating poems

- From the very beginning, be sure you make note of where you located the poems. In the final anthology, you must include complete publication information for each poem selected in a works cited page in correct MLA format. If the poem has been republished on the internet, include whatever original publication information is available.
- To begin, you will need to collect poems from various sources. While you may make use of an online resource like the Academy of American Poets Poems for Every Occasion or a print collection like The Poet's Grimm: 20th Century Poems from Grimm Fairy Tales, you may not compile your listing of poems entirely from an existing anthology.
- I've included a list of online poetry collections in Blackboard. Many of these resources also have links to other good online resources; ideally if you locate one that you find particularly valuable, the links for that resource will be especially worth pursuing. Remember that you need poems from multiple sources, so do look at many different web sites.
- Don't ignore book collections in the process either. Your textbook for the course includes a wide range of poems, as do other print anthologies. In our library, try a keyword search for "poetry and anthology," for example, or "anthology poems."
- As you read through collections of poetry, you may feel overwhelmed by the huge number of poems. Don't feel you must read every poem you run across. Skim the first few lines, look at the end of the poem, read titles. Browse. One of the goals of this assignment is to help you gain familiarity with a range of poetry, so by all means range around. Don't limit your browsing just to reading titles, however; oftentimes a title will not reveal the subject of a poem.

Critical introduction

The critical introduction to your anthology should be approximately six typewritten double-spaced pages in length (no less than five, and no more than eight). The introduction must accomplish two things: first, connect the poems thematically, exploring the topic you have

chosen, and secondly, provide a discussion of each individual poem. A simple way to approach this is to write a one-page introduction to the overall theme and then about a half-page of discussion of each individual poem, followed by a brief conclusion.

The first part of the introduction should discuss the poems and their relationship to the topic. In this introduction, you will explore the theme of your anthology; you may also want to comment on the literary elements that help tie the works together, such as shared metaphors, or a recognizable pattern of imagery. In many ways, this overall introduction may be the hardest part of the anthology to write; avoid the temptation to make vast overgeneralizations, however true, about how poets have written love poems since the first poems were written. You may want to briefly mention the names of several poems, but do not mention them all, as your table of contents provides that information.

The second part of the introduction should discuss the individual poems. You may choose to discuss each poem individually, or to compare poems in small groups: how do two poems respond to each other, for example, or handle the same concept in different ways? Regardless of how you choose to approach this section, each poem included in your anthology should be discussed in some detail.

Anthology presentation

You will prepare your anthology in a digital format, using a word processing program such as Microsoft Word. Or you may choose to create your anthology using a technology like PowerPoint or even to create a website. I can help you with technical concerns with any of these formats. Be sure that when you reproduce poems that you reproduce them *accurately*, as they appeared in their original publication—spacing, capitalization, etc. In many cases you will be able to copy and paste poems from the internet, but if you must retype a poem, please be sure to check it carefully for both spelling and formatting errors.

In each of these formats, you may make use of whatever tools you wish to enhance the appearance of your anthology. As you assemble your anthology, you will make design choices as well regarding its appearance; certainly the reader is affected by the presentation of the poems, but remember to keep your focus on the poems themselves. Please avoid ornate fonts that make the poem difficult to read or detract from the poem itself. Any illustrations included should be appropriate to the subject matter, as should any audio. And remember: decorating an anthology beautifully will only enhance the work if you have also carefully prepared a strong critical introduction, chosen appropriate poems, and documented your sources accurately.