

## Exercise: The meaning of a word

Due Monday, January 25, by 2 p.m. on Sakai Assignments.

In any of the assigned poems, choose a *single word* that seems important to you. Perhaps you aren't sure what it means, or you think it has a double or ambiguous meaning, or it is used metaphorically. Perhaps even some component part of the word seems significant on its own.

Look the word up in the [Oxford English Dictionary](#) online. Read the entire dictionary entry and decide which definitions are relevant, paying attention to the chronology: if your poem was written around 1600, *OED* definitions with citations that only start in 1800 are not relevant. On the other hand, if the poem was written in 2000, *OED* definitions marked "obsolete" *might* be relevant, but in most cases probably not. Consider whether the etymology is of interest, too; poets are often interested in etymology themselves.

Write a short, one-paragraph note (50–100 words) reflecting on the significance of the word's meaning or meanings in the poem. Quote the dictionary entry as appropriate.

Turn in your paragraph on Sakai. I prefer to receive assignments as PDF files, but Word documents are also fine.

To cite an *OED* entry, the following form is sufficient:

*Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (2011), s.v. "literature."

The date for an *OED* entry is given in the entry display online. "S.v." stands for "sub verbo" (under the word).

### GRADING

You may receive either full (4.0) or half (2.0) credit. You will receive full credit if your paragraph discusses a word an assigned poem in detail, with mostly appropriate reference to the *OED*.

### LATE POLICY

You may turn in up to four late exercises any time up until the last day of class. Late exercises may receive no more than half credit (2.0).