English First Peoples – First Nations Poet Biography, Analysis Essay and Class Presentation Assignment

In this assignment you will be researching a first nations poet, and a poem, or poems, they have written, in order to prepare a written biography, an analysis essay and a class presentation. You will need to choose your poem and poet. Before beginning work, check with Ms. Ashley to see if your choice is acceptable. Only one person will be able to do any specific poem, so if you really want to use a particular poem then get approval early. You will need a copy of the poem or lyrics. It must be written by a First nations person, and relate to first nations peoples in terms of history, culture, tradition, identity, issues or themes.

**Guidelines for research and preparation:**

1. Choose one poem by this poet (please get it approved – before you move forward). You will need to submit a copy of the poem with your written assignment. Include title, author and date of publication.
2. Research your poet. See written biography requirements for details.
3. Identify 5-10 poetic devices (figurative language) that the poet uses to develop the meaning of their poem, and explain how using reasons, examples and explanation.
4. Identify how the poem relates to first nations peoples in terms of history, culture, tradition, identity, issues or themes. Be able to identify specific examples from the poem to show this.
5. Identify the main theme of the poem and be able to explain it.
6. Identify 5-10 images related to first nations peoples in terms of history, culture, tradition, identity, issues or themes based on the poem you have chosen. Find pictures that represent these images to use in your class presentation.
7. **Written biography**

A biography is simply the story of a life. Shorter biographies tell the basic facts of someone's life and importance. Biographies analyze and interpret the events in a person's life. They try to find connections, explain the meaning of unexpected actions or mysteries, and make arguments about the significance of the person's accomplishments or life activities. Most biographies are written in chronological (time) order.

*Part 1: Research*

Answer the basic research questions below about your poet by using the internet and/or other sources to find the information. (you may not be able to find out the answers to all of these questions but do the best you can) \*Note- Some questions are ones you can find the answers to, while others are ones you have to think about and answer based on your research. Examples of biographies can be found on [www.biography.com](http://www.biography.com) .

* 1. When were they born?
  2. When did they die? (or are they still alive?)
  3. Where do/did they live?
  4. What type of schooling did they have?
  5. What do you know about their family? (parents/siblings) Are/Were they married? Do/did they have children?
  6. What are their major achievements? Have they won any awards? What books have they written? What events have shaped this person’s life?
  7. What influences them in their writing? Do they have any heroes or role models? Have they had to face any obstacles in their lives? What makes them special or interesting?
  8. Why is this person’s writing important to first nations literature?
  9. Why is this person’s writing important to first nations culture?

*Part 2: Written Biography*

Use the research you have compiled to compose a written biography for your poet that is 1-2 pages in length. Group information into paragraphs in an order that makes sense. You must write a rough copy, edit and do a good copy.

*Part 3: Biography presentation*

Use the research you compiled in part 1 to create the biography portion of your presentation. Include the items that are most important to understanding the poem you have chosen, and why the poet wrote it.

1. **Class Presentation**

You will be expected to present a 5-10 minute presentation on your poem using either a power point, prezi or similar format. The presentation must include the following:

*Part 1: Biography*

1. Create slides that summarize your written biography of the poet you have chosen.
2. Provide the author, title, and when the work was written.
3. Provide biographical information that is relevant to understanding the poem.

*Part 2: Poem analysis*

1. Present a copy of your poem.
2. Explain why you chose this poem and why it appealed to you.
3. Explain what the poem is about and what it means.
4. Explain what the poem is about and what it means.
5. Explain how the poem relates to first nations peoples in terms of history, culture, tradition, identity, issues or themes. Highlight this relation by identifying at least 2 specific examples that demonstrate these connections, and teach the class how the poem develops those connections through an thorough explanation.
6. Identify 2 uses of figurative language that help the poet convey their message and explain how this is done.

*Part 3: Imagery*

1. Present 5 images that you identify based on the poem and its content.
2. Explain where you got the ideas for the images from and how they relate to first nations peoples in terms of history, culture, tradition, identity, issues or themes.

*Part 4: Conclusion*

1. Explain why this poem is important as an example of first nations literature.
2. **Poetry Analysis Essay**

You will have to write a 5 paragraph essay analysis of your poem based on the following thesis statement:

The poem “ (Name of poem” by (name of poet) explores the theme/issue of (identify the theme/issue) in order to demonstrate (Identify the message of the poem).

Example- The poem “Walking both sides of an invisible border” by Alootook Ipellie explores the issue of first nations identity in order to demonstrate the difficulties faced by First Nations peoples trying to balance their culture with that of the Western World.

Your three body paragraphs must explore the following topics:

Body Paragraph #1- The use of figurative language (ie. Poetic devices) to convey the theme/message of the poem.

Body Paragraph #2- The use of form (point of view/tone/repetition/structure) to convey the theme/message of the poem.

Body Paragraph #3- The use of specific content (setting/history/character/plot/setting) to develop and convey the theme/message of the poem.

More handouts to help with planning for and writing the essay will follow.