

Workshop Prep & Written Feedback

Workshop, for the poet with a poem in the packet, is an opportunity to receive from fellow poets a variety of feedback that will help guide revision.

Workshop, for the rest of the workshop group, is a chance to meet the poem on its own terms, describe its strategies, and from there offer specific ideas that may help guide revision.

To make this happen, everyone in the workshop needs to **prepare** by reading the entire packet. For each poem in it, you should:

1. Number the lines and stanzas (so we can all have quick reference)
2. Read once for initial impressions (and you may offer some marginal comments to document your first response)
3. Pause to describe to yourself what you're reading—what are its strategies
4. Read again, layering in additional marginal comments, many of which are likely to be descriptive (e.g. “Here, you're repeating the vowel sounds of the first stanza.” or “You've used all endstopped lines until this point.”)
5. Write (longhand or typed) an End Comment that includes:
 - A. A short description of what the poem intends to do (in your understanding)
 - B. Specific craft strategies that you find interesting/notable/enviable (be specific; refer to line or stanza)
 - C. Ideas of options in revision (options are more helpful than “what I'd do is...”)

Doing this preparation and writing your feedback **before** workshop is key. Even if, during workshop, you come to a new understanding of the poem, it helps the poet to see what your first readings were. This feedback, while at times contradictory, is much more helpful than any kind of consensus—and in workshop we'll try hard to resist consensus. It's not our job to validate (and certainly not to dismiss) any of these poems.

* At intervals, I'll ask to read your End Comments (and occasionally your marginal comments) before I hand them on to the poet.