

## Example of Student Writing – College Ready

“On Reading Poems to a Senior Class” is a poem that uses a lot of metaphors to convey the author’s meaning. The overall metaphor in the poem is the comparison of the classroom to an aquarium, with students being the fish and water being imagination and focus. I think the author uses this unexpected metaphor to illustrate the surprise of the teacher at the reactions of her students and convey that no one should jump to conclusions too quickly.

When the poem began, the author mentioned that the students were “sitting there as orderly as frozen fish.” I believe this metaphor is important because the author wanted the reader to understand the feeling in the room. The students were unsatisfied, bored, and motionless, much like dead fish are.

When the poet brought up the water filling the room, immediately I thought that just as water allows fish to breath, maybe the “water” was imagination filling the room and allowing the students to metaphorically come to life. She also said “I did not notice till it reached my ears.” Some people may think that she meant till the water made it to her ear level, but I think it’s an auditory thing, showing that the students were vocalizing and becoming interested in the poems.

When the poet began to talk about how she “heard the sounds of fish in an aquarium,” I was perplexed at first. I thought aquariums were somewhat silent, but then I realized that just because it’s quiet, that doesn’t mean there isn’t life! She continued to say, “and I knew that though I had tried to drown them with my words that they had only opened up like gills for them and let me in.” Again, I was confused at first, but I think the author was trying to show that, no, she didn’t want to drown the students; she was trying to immerse them in the poems. The significance of this stanza is that the teacher is surprised that the students are as enthused by the poems as they are. She expected that her words would drown them, but the students were

**Comment [1]:** The language is a little more informal than what would be required in most college papers.

**Comment [2]:** The student should use the author’s name, rather than refer to “the author” or “the poet.”

**Comment [3]:** This student demonstrates a strong understanding of metaphor and figurative language. There are clear references to the text and elaboration on the meaning of those references.

inspired instead.

The simile “together we swam around the room like thirty tails whacking words” made me think about eager minds being enlightened by thoughts. Clearly, the class was getting into the poems just as much as the teacher, and they're no longer comparable to “dead fish.” This makes me think about how in my English class, when we get into an argument or discussion and everyone becomes very engaged and involved. We will be throwing statements and opinions back and forth, which is what I think the author meant by the use of “whacking words.”

The next clear metaphor I found was when the author wrote, “till the bell rang, puncturing a hole in the door where we all leaked out.” Since the “fish” need “water” to survive, the bell ringing causes the kids to leave the room by “puncturing a hole in the door.” When the “water” escapes the room, so does all the imagination and focus from the students' minds. The speaker was also brought back to reality when she went home and “Queen Elizabeth my cat...licked my fins till they were hands again.” I think this means that the aquarium only exists inside the classroom, and when the “fish” and “water”, or students and imagination, are gone, the teacher is back to being just a person.

The author uses the aquarium metaphor throughout the poem to show the difference between a class of “dead fish” and students who are interested in the poems. Also, the author demonstrates how much this difference surprises the teacher because she “did not notice” the change at first and thought the poems would “drown” the students. I think this means that the author wants us to not assume what will interest students, and not jump to conclusions in general, because you never know when the real world might turn into a busy aquarium.

## Assessment

### **Strengths**

The student shows a clear understanding of figurative language and gives several examples of how the author uses it. Not only does the student provide examples from the text, the examples are also explained and elaborated on. The structure of the paper is strong, providing a formal introduction with a thesis statement, developed paragraphs in the body, and a conclusion.

### **Opportunities for Improvement**

The tone is a little casual, and this, along with some minor grammar errors, could be improved by further drafting/editing. The student shows the ability to analyze, but the essay needs a bit more polish.

### **Overall**

This essay is **College Ready** because it indicates the author is thinking critically, addressing the prompt, and uses text well to support ideas. The essay would benefit from additional editing.

The Scoring Sheet that accompanies this CRA is designed to assess the student's performance throughout the CRA, so here are some example skills and scores based only on this final essay:

<b>Exceeding College Ready (4):</b> Substantially exceeds the performance expectations <b>College Ready (3):</b> Shows proficiency in all of the performance expectations <b>Approaching College Ready (2):</b> Meets only some of the performance expectations <b>Initiating College Ready (1):</b> Does not yet meet the performance expectations
--

KEY COGNITIVE SKILLS	Instructor's Score
<b>Intellectual Curiosity</b> (engages in scholarly inquiry)	<b>3</b>
<b>Reasoning</b> (considers arguments and conclusions of self and others)	<b>3</b>
FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS	Instructor's Score
<b>Writing Across the Curriculum</b> (writes clearly and coherently using standard writing conventions; composes and revises drafts)	<b>3</b>
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS	Instructor's Score
<b>Writing</b> (develops effective rhetorical techniques; generates ideas and gathers information relevant to the topic and purpose; evaluates relevance, quality, sufficiency, and depth of sources; formulates a thesis; composes drafts to refine key ideas, organize them more logically, fluidly; uses language precisely and effectively; edits writing for proper voice, tense, syntax)	<b>2</b>