**PAPER #1 (3-4 pp.) Two Poems**

Compare and contrast two poems in the Gardner anthology. ONE of them MAY have been assigned for the course, but at least one has to be one that is in the anthology but not formally assigned. (Two unassigned poems are ok too.)

Quote frequently from both poems, and analyze quoted passages in detail. Make sure that you carefully discuss both similarities and differences. And take care to analyze and interpret, not just summarize. Do either a) or b):  
a) Pick two poems by the same author. If you didn't know that they were by the same author, how would you prove it?  
Discuss the author's style, habitual subject matter, tone, speakers, historical context, etc.  
b) Pick two poems by different authors which are similar in some ways (e.g. subject matter, style, etc.) but different in others. (e.g., tone, historical situation).

**PAPER #2 Close Reading of Fiction** 3-4 pp.

Build a paper around a brief quotation (say, 1-5 lines) from a story in the Gardner anthology. You may use any story in the anthology--I encourage you to use one that has NOT been assigned for the class. If you do use one that has been assigned, make sure that you have something NEW to add to it--do NOT just repeat what we said in class!!! ;)

Obviously you'll want to choose a passage that is important to the meaning of the story, one that reveals something central about the structure of the story, or about the characters, the narrator, or one of the important themes. In a unified essay with a clear and focused argument:

* A. Identify the context of the quotation and analyze it carefully and in detail, calling attention to words and phrases which are important to understanding its meaning.
* B. Then connect it to other passages, related to it structurally or thematically, from elsewhere in the story.
* C. And, most importantly, relate it to the overall movement of the story, showing how a coherent interpretation can be built around a close reading of this passage.

What I'll be looking for: a careful, thoughtful reading of the story in question, showing that you understand it in detail and have the pertinent parts at your fingertips. You should use evidence from the text to back up your assertions. This means that you should quote frequently from the text, but it's not sufficient merely to quote: you need to comment specifically on the passages you choose, pointing out particular words that are relevant to your chosen topic.

To give you an idea of a "close reading," here's a rule of thumb:

Try to paraphrase the (relatively short) passage you've quoted. You will likely find that your first paraphrase is inadequate, because quite naturally you've tried to summarize in terms of "common sense."

If the passage is any good at all, it will resist this sort of reduction, and you'll feel that you haven't got it yet.

That something else, that degree to which the author diverges from "common sense," is what you're trying to get at in your close reading, in your subsequent paraphrases, your pointing out of odd words, phrases, punctuation, etc. that make your passage different. This technique of close reading is your basic weapon in any literature paper.