

ASSIGNMENT 4: PRIMARY SOURCE READING RESPONSE PAPERS

Assignment Purpose: to give you practice close-reading a sixteenth-century text; to familiarize you with searching the *Oxford English Dictionary* the *Early English Books Online* database and with how to approach early printed books.

Assignment Details

For reading response 1:

Read the poems assigned for the day's reading. Take your time, paying attention to rhyme, meter, and other elements of form. Use the *Oxford English Dictionary* (accessed through the UCD library homepage—we will go over this in class) to look up the history of at least one word in the poems. How does knowing the word's early modern meanings change the way you read the text? Write 1-2 pages, close-reading a detail about one or both of the poems, including analysis of both form and content and somewhere including what you learned from the *OED*. You should have a thesis-like statement at some point in your paper, either at the beginning or at the end. This is an informal writing assignment, but it's designed to get you thinking about how to make claims about primary texts.

For reading response 2:

For this assignment, you will use the *Early English Books Online* database to view early publications of *The Faerie Queene* and write about how seeing these early texts affects your reading of the poem. Search *EEBO* (accessed through the UCD library homepage—we will go over this in class and I will provide a separate handout for your use at home) for late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century publications of Spenser's poem.

Using this text, write a 2-3 page paper addressing the following questions:

- What information does *EEBO* give you about this copy of the poem? Which library holds it? When is it dated? Is there any extra information?
- What kinds of *paratextual materials* (dedications, prefaces, portraits, etc.) appear in this copy? How do these paratextual materials affect the way you read the main text?
- What is included in this copy? Only *The Faerie Queene*, or other texts as well? How many books of *The Faerie Queene*? Three? Six? Seven?
- Do you see evidence of early readers writing in this book? Can you decipher what's written? Where in the text did they write? Do you think this is significant?
- What challenges does Spenser's poem pose? Was it difficult to read and understand? Why? Did seeing an *EEBO* copy give you new understandings of the text, or did it make the poem more enigmatic?
- Choose one or two stanzas from the assigned reading and compare them in your modern edition and in the *EEBO* edition. Do they look the same, or are there differences? Paying attention to both form and content, devote a paragraph to a close reading of this/these stanza(s), including a close reading of differences, if any.