

Evaluating Diction

- Begin by circling/highlighting a list of all the “diction words” (all the words that catch your attention or that you know you don’t know)
- write out both their *denotative* and *connotative* meaning
- Somewhere on this page, you need to discuss tone and purpose of the poem (why might the author have chosen those words? how to they affect meaning?)
- Point out any other literary device you deem pertinent to an understanding of the poem
- End by constructing a *theme statement* that would lead you to a discussion of how diction is used in the poem

“The Naked and the Nude” by Robert Graves

For me, the naked and the nude
(By lexicographers construed
As synonyms that should express
The same deficiency of dress
Or shelter) stand as wide apart
As love from lies, or truth from art.

Lovers without reproach will gaze
On bodies naked and ablaze;
The Hippocratic eye will see
In nakedness, anatomy;
And naked shines the Goddess when
She mounts her lion among men.

The nude are bold, the nude are sly
To hold each treasonable eye.
While draping by a showman's trick
Their dishabille in rhetoric,
They grin a mock-religious grin
Of scorn at those of naked skin.

The naked, therefore, who compete
Against the nude may know defeat;
Yet when they both together tread
The briary pastures of the dead,
By Gorgons with long whips pursued,
How naked go the sometime nude!

Graves is clearly making a distinction between the words “naked” and “nude,” but what is he saying about those words? What does he want us to understand about how people use these two words? What should we understand about the types of people Graves’ mentions?