

**UIL Literary Criticism  
Tie-Breaking Essay  
Invitational A 2009**

Read Octavio Paz's "No More Clichés" (below) and offer a discussion of the persona's attitude as it is revealed through the basic comparison that is the poem.

**No More Clichés**

Beautiful face  
That like a daisy opens its petals to the sun  
So do you  
Open your face to me as I turn the page.

Enchanting smile  
Any man would be under your spell,  
Oh, beauty of a magazine.

How many poems have been written to you?  
How many Dantes have written to you, Beatrice?  
To your obsessive illusion  
To your manufactured fantasy.  
But today I won't make one more Cliché  
And write this poem to you.  
No, no more clichés.

The original Beatrice is Dante's idealized image of womanly beauty in his long fourteenth century poem, *The Divine Comedy*.

This poem is dedicated to those women  
Whose beauty is in their charm,  
In their intelligence,  
In their character,  
Not on their fabricated looks.

This poem is to you women,  
That like a Shahrazade wake up  
Every day with a new story to tell,  
story that sings for change  
That hopes for battles:  
Battles for the love of the united flesh

She is the legendary Arabian storyteller of *One Thousand and One Nights* who tells stories that mesmerize the king and thereby saves herself from his unwanted advances and certain death.

Battles for passions aroused by a new day  
Battle for the neglected rights  
Or just battles to survive one more night.

Yes, to you women in a world of pain  
To you, bright star in this ever-spending universe  
To you, fighter of a thousand-and-one fights  
To you, friend of my heart.

From now on, my head won't look down to a magazine  
Rather, it will contemplate the night  
And its bright stars,  
And so, no more clichés.

---

**Critical Notes on Octavio Paz's "No More Clichés"**

Literary concepts that **MIGHT** be used by the contestant in a discussion of Paz's poem include

allusion, apostrophe, cliché, metaphor, muse, pun, simile, and tone.

The basic comparison that should be made by the contestant is between, on one hand, womanly beauty as defined by the images found in magazines (a species of beauty to which Dante and his "successors" [the "many Dantes"] across the centuries [persona's tone] have too often alluded and emphasized), and, on the other hand, the beauty that is exemplified in Shahrazade's successful attempt to forestall her fate (a beauty defined by charm, intelligence, and character: not on "fabricated looks").

Beatrice's beauty is a passive beauty to be idealized, gawked at, and, in our own glamorized world, unfortunately emulated.

Shahrazade's beauty is surpassed by her skill as a storyteller—her charm, her intelligence, and her character (all implied through the allusion to Shahrazade as storyteller).

Women should not be valued as objects of beauty, as is too often promoted in our culture's magazines. Women should be recognized as "fighter[s] of a thousand-and-one fights" (pun), especially women "who are friend[s] of the heart"—not of the eye.