A précis is a short highly structured paragraph that records the essential elements of a poem, including (1) the name of the poet, (2) the title of the poem, (3) the theme or meaning of the poem, (4) the stylistic elements of the poem that support the theme, (5) the structure of the poem, and (6) the identity of the speaker and his or her attitude towards the subject of the poem. For homework tonight, first read and annotate “Penelope” by Dorothy Parker. Then, construct a well-written and organized précis analyzing the poem.

Part I: Annotate the poem following the steps in the “How to Read a Poem” packet (see Writing Samples & Resources on the website). Your annotations should be neat and thorough.

Penelope

In the pathway of the sun,
In the footsteps of the breeze,
Where the world and sky are one,
He shall ride the silver seas,
He shall cut the glittering wave.
I shall sit at home, and rock;
Rise, to heed a neighbor's knock;
Brew my tea, and snip my thread;
Bleach the linen for my bed.
They will call him brave.

Dorothy Parker
Part II: Write the Precise (one paragraph – max. 300 words)

☐ Opening Sentence: In the [genre], “[title],” [poet] [signal verb + that] [the theme or meaning of the poem].

- Identifying the theme involves taking everything into account and drawing a conclusion regarding the overall meaning of the poem.

- **Signal verbs**: asserts, argues, believes, claims, conveys the thought, declares, demonstrates, elucidates, expounds the idea, finds, identifies the fact, illustrates, implies, points out, posits, proposes, reports, reveals, states, suggests... *that*...

☐ An explanation of how the poet develops the theme through elements of style and poetic devices (i.e. figurative language, imagery, sound devices, allusion etc.) starting with the title and moving in sequence through the poem.

☐ An explanation of how the structure of the poem contributes to the development of the theme. This may be identified through identifying the division of the poem into stanzas, the shifts in subject and/or tone, and sometimes a prescribed rhyme pattern.

☐ A description of the speaker of the poem and the attitude the speaker has towards his or her subject. This may include an explanation of the progression in the speaker’s tone. Poems rarely sound a single note and acknowledging the complexity or progression of the speaker’s tone is important.