

LETTER TO THE TEACHERS

Hello, teachers.

If you are reading this, it means that you're a pretty rad teacher. It means that you care about what you teach your students and are willing to look at more unconventional ways to reach them. We hope that we can help. We're here to help you take your students beyond the basic, more traditional ways in which poetry is usually taught. And, yes, by "basic," we mean "boring."

Inside this book, you will find a variety of lessons, questions, and writing prompts to help foster an appreciation for poetry. These lessons were developed by classroom teachers who have been using spoken word as a way to hook our students. We have seen the power of poetry and have watched students who have never read a poem aloud go on to compete in a city-wide poetry slam. We have seen students from different racial, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds come together to share their poetry with each other. The list goes on.

So now it's your turn. This book is a tool for you to use in your classroom. Only you know the intricacies of your classroom. Just because they worked in one classroom does not mean they will work in every classroom. Therefore, feel free to modify these lessons to suit your students' needs. Use the lessons as a supplement to an already active poetry unit. Add some of your own questions or writing prompts. Do what's best for your classroom. If you come up with something awesome, we'd love to hear about it so that we could share it with others.

Now go on with your bad self. You've got brains to feed.

Rock and/or roll,

Tim Stafford and Molly Meacham

OVERVIEW

As you go through these lessons, you will notice that some have questions and some do not. Most of the questions are specific to that poem. To help with the rest we have included a list of basic questions that can be used for not only the poems in this book, but for all poems in general.

These are some of the basic questions that may be addressed to help dig into the poems:

1. *Who is the speaker of the poem? What do you know about the speaker from what he/she/it says?*
2. *Who is the intended audience? How does that affect the course of the poem?*
3. *What is the subject addressed in the poem?*
4. *What is the purpose (or heart) of the poem?*
5. *How does the speaker's feeling toward the subject or audience affect the tone (the emotion) of the poem?*

Additional questions:

1. *What figurative language is used? Remember vocabulary: metaphor, simile, personification, animism, hyperbole, synecdoche, metonymy, allusion.*
2. *Does repetition or anaphora play a part?*
3. *How does cadence get created? Do any use form? Rhythm or meter?*
4. *What sounds affect the texture of the poem? Remember vocabulary: alliteration, assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia.*

"IN FRONT OF THE CLASS" BY BONAFIDE ROJAS

Repetition

Repetition is a technique that spans many poetic forms. It can appear in a sestina, a pantoum, or in the hook of a rap. Usually repetition is used to reinforce the poet's message. It can also give the poem a rhythm. In this poem, Bronx based poet Bonafide Rojas uses repetition to explain how he feels about the teaching profession.

Pre-Reading Prompt

If you were a teacher, what is the most important piece of advice you would give to your students?

After Reading Questions

- 1. What words or phrases are repeated throughout this poem?*
The phrases "I tell them," "tell them," and "let the page be" are repeated throughout the poem.
- 2. What effect do these repeated words have on the reader?*
The repeated phrases read like a list of demands. They come slowly at first but they start coming faster and faster as the poem goes along. It has a frantic effect on the reader.
- 3. What message do you think the poet is trying to get across to the reader?*
The message of this poem is that writing can give you all the things you need if you let it. It doesn't matter what background you come from. If you want it bad enough and are willing to work hard, you can achieve the unreachable.

After Reading Prompt

The poet asks his students, "What will be your legacy?" If you were to leave this school tomorrow and never come back, how would you want to be remembered by your peers? What have you done or what would you like to change to earn that legacy?

WORKSHEET: "IN FRONT OF THE CLASS" BY BONAFIDE ROJAS

Name: _____

Date: _____

Reading Questions

1. *What words or phrases are repeated throughout this poem?*

2. *What effect do these repeated words have on the reader?*

3. *What message do you think the poet is trying to get across to the reader?*

After Reading Prompt

The poet asks his students, "What will be your legacy?" If you were to leave this school tomorrow and never come back, how would you want to be remembered by your peers? What have you done or what would you like to change to earn that legacy?

"IGNITION" BY CRISTIN O'KEEFE APTOWICZ

Pre-reading or Writing Prompt:

Imagine the first time you tried something (G-rated, please). What was the reason? What were the sights, smells, tastes, and sounds that you remember around that experience?

Explain it to someone else so he or she would understand the feeling.

After Reading Questions:

1. *Why is the poem arranged the way it is?*

The poem is mostly made of couplets. Each couplet refers to a certain scene. The scenes might be different but they are linked because they all have to do with something that happened "the first time." It isolates the images, but it allows the reader to read through the images quickly.

2. *Does the arrangement help or hinder the reading?*

Student opinion; answers will vary.

3. *What do you notice about the punctuation? What effect does it have on reading?*

The only punctuation is a comma in the last couplet. There is also no capitalization. This could be because the poet wants you to be able to read through it quickly. There is no punctuation to act as a road block. It indicates the pacing of the experience.

4. *Would the poem be different in first or third person?*

Student opinion; answers will vary.

5. *What effect does it have on you to have the speaker talking to you?*

The poet is making a connection with the reader whether they like it or not. The poet is forcing the reader to think about these experiences and make comparisons to their own similar experiences.

WORKSHEET: "IGNITION" BY CRISTIN O'KEEFE APTOWICZ

Name: _____

Date: _____

After Reading Questions:

1. *Why is the poem arranged the way it is?*

2. *Does the arrangement help or hinder the reading?*

3. *What do you notice about the punctuation? What effect does it have on reading?*

4. *Would the poem be different in first or third person?*

5. *What effect does it have on you to have the speaker talking to you?*
