

#Flashwrite Teen Poetry MOOC 2016

CLASS THREE • Discussion Topics

1. How do you notice poets in your readings this week (or readings in the videos) playing with sound? With diction? After reading the poems, what do you think the poets' word choice tells you about their way of seeing the world? Which reading did you like the most and why? Which reading do you remember the most and why? What questions do you have about poems or about writing in general?
2. What kind of feelings or sensations can you create using sound and do these feelings and sensations have to agree with the diction (word choice)? How do you see sonic (relating to sound) elements changing or informing the content of your poems? Why – and this is serious – would you ever want to rhyme two words? Lastly, what is a phrase from a song or poem that always pops into your head? Does it being remembered have to do more with sound, meaning, or is it a little of both?
3. What is a poem that you remember very well? Why do you think you remember it? Did you hear it over and over in childhood? I sing my son nursery rhymes all day it seems and I've realized that rhyme is one of the first language tools we have access to. It starts with moo, and then moon, then wow, and oww, and neigh, then no, bye and night, and so on. Perhaps this is why rhyming is so intrinsic to our memories? Each word is an arrow to a word that sounds like the original word but just by altering one letter sometimes, means something entirely different.
4. What have you observed about your relationship to rhyme in terms of how you've evolved thus far as a reader and writer of poetry? Why, as children, do we read poetry, exclusively, that rhymes? Why do you think there is not an emphasis on free form poetry for children? How many of you can still recall certain poems you learned as children, have them committed to mind without effort, these patches like genes? Also, on a slightly different note, why don't we learn poetry a little bit more backwards? In early education, why does it seem like we learn so much poetry that is antiquated and adherent to a strict formal constraint before being exposed to more accessible, contemporary poetry, and THEN moving backwards to achieve contextual understanding?
5. Read Cathy Park Hong's "Ballad in A." What are the peculiar things you notice about the diction, about Hong's word choice? First, what is the story being told in this poem? How is that story complicated or enhanced by diction? By alliteration, assonance, rhyme, and the other sonic resources that Danny talks about in today's class? Finally, think about the constraint used in the poem. Hong uses only one vowel throughout the entire poem: the letter A. As such it in part becomes a poem about verbal facility, about play. What do you see as the most playful moments, both in sonic play and in word play? What are these moments doing thematically? How does this play interact with the costumes of the 'Western' genre? What registers of diction can we see or enumerate in the poem, and how does the



poem's mixing of registers 'play' with the idea of the American West -- a region where law finds its limits, and where various cultures meet to stake a claim?