



INTERNATIONAL  
WRITING PROGRAM

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**Power of the Pen: Identities and Social Issues in Poetry and Plays**

Week 6 Introduction – Transcript

>>[text on screen: Power of the Pen: Identities and Social Issues in Poetry and Plays]

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>>[text on screen: We are very proud to bring you the perspective of authors from around the world, and trust that you will find their perspectives valuable. Because some of our contributing authors are nonnative speakers of English, we suggest that you turn on video captions. You can turn on captions by clicking the “cc” button at the bottom right of the video.]

>>[text on screen: Glossary of terms on Week 6 Page]

>>During our class videos, you may hear our poets and playwrights use terms that are new to you. We have created a list of key terms and definitions that you can refer to at any point during our video lectures. This list is available on the “Videos and Readings” class page where you can read it or download it as a PDF. If you would like to find and review these terms while you watch each class video, you can stop this video go back to the “Videos and Readings” class page and download the PDF. There you can play this video in each of the following class videos. If you have any questions about these terms, we encourage you to ask you teaching team in the weekly class discussions.

>>[text on screen: Week 6 Introduction]

>>Welcome back to Block C, this is week six, our final week of classes, and the theme today is activating identities, a continuation from last week which includes movement, crisis, conflict, forcing reexamination of identity. And the craft topics include refinement and revision and of course resolution and endings since that's where we are this week. And this includes refining the relationship between the voices and structures in settings we set up at the beginning of our work and continuing whatever voice that was we set up in week one, when we started to establish what is the voice of this piece and who are the voices speaking. This brings us to thinking how do we bridge and connect that to our endings. What has the journey of this voice been? What's the journey of these characters or what is the journey of this theme? Where do we land at the end and sometimes we have a plan for our endings and it doesn't work out. That we're hi-jacked by the poem or the play or we're hi-jacked by the character that who wants to do something different. And one example of that is in Euripides's play, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, no one really knows if Euripides intended for Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter to come to completion or whether truly, the gods came in and whisked her away and saved her. And if I were to produce that today I would have to ask myself what is the more appropriate ending for that piece? Could I give it a context in today's social justice and find what would be the right representation of that ending of this character's journey and change.

>>Which has to do with remaining vigilant about where your materials seem to be taking you. I'm thinking of how Chekhov advised us to remember that if you put a gun on the mantle piece in the first act, it's going to have to go off by the third act but the question is where and how it's gonna go off. We may have ideas that it's supposed to go off here but remaining alert may lead us to a darker, deeper and ultimately truer sense of where that gun might go off.

>>Yes, and just as Lorca introduces that knife and gives us the idea, that knife is going to have more meaning by the end of the play, the meaning for that knife will build and build throughout that play.

>>And so it seems to me, when I'm writing a poem from that tone that has been generated or discovered at the start of the poem and I'm gathering my materials and I'm hoping it's coming to some kind of fruition and I'm trying to remain alert to it, I'm also thinking of that wonderful piece of advice that the poet, Robert Hass, has given, which is, that if you, if the poem ends with a statement, reverse the terms of that statement which is to say as you near the end of a poem or a play this is a moment to interrogate anew. All of your assumptions about what you have written thus far and what you think it might add up to. It's a way of remaining watchful.

>>For sure and also remaining in the present moment socially and politically and in our communities.

>>Exactly.

>>So really notice what we need at this moment.

>>Onward.

>>[text on screen: This program was made possible by the generous support of the American people through the U.S Department of State and by the University of Iowa.]

>>[logos on screen: American Flag, Department of State, University of Iowa]