

The Furious Flower Syllabus Project: Opening the World of Black Poetry

THE FURIOUS FLOWER SYLLABUS PROJECT: OPENING THE WORLD OF BLACK POETRY

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(PREFACE)



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ABOUT THE FURIOUS FLOWER POETRY CENTER

Celebrate. Educate. Preserve.



The Furious Flower Poetry Center, located at James Madison University, is the nation's first academic center dedicated to Black poetry. For more than 25 years, Furious Flower has reached thousands of poets, educators, students, and poetry lovers through its [decade-defining conference](#), groundbreaking media and anthologies, workshops, reading series, and seminars. Furious Flower continues to impact literary communities on local, regional, national, and international levels, creating platforms for Black poets to engage new audiences and for audiences to experience Black literary culture. The Furious Flower Poetry Center is also committed to ensuring the visibility, inclusion, and critical consideration of Black poets in American letters, as well as in the whole range of educational curricula. Our programming seeks to cultivate an appreciation for poetry among students of all levels—from elementary to graduate school and beyond. To learn more about the Furious Flower Poetry Center, visit www.jmu.edu/furiousflower

PREFACE

... we are each other's
harvest:
we are each other's
business:
we are each other's
magnitude and bond.

Gwendolyn Brooks, "Paul Robeson," *Blacks* (p. 496)

Two hundred and fifty years ago, Phillis Wheatley published *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773) and planted the seeds of Black poetic expression in this country amid the turmoil of suspicion concerning her authenticity as a writer, her literary genius, even her humanity. As a very young, enslaved woman, she decided to use her literary gifts to weigh in on the status of the free and the unfree in eighteenth-century Boston. Even though she lived to be only 31 years old, she left a legacy of excellence that Black writers have used for two and a half centuries to inspire their own poetry and the traditions that continue to shape the creation of their poetic works. The audience for Black poetry has grown as rapidly as its creators: through its anthologies, internationally distributed videos, its online presence, its readings and programs.

In the middle of the twentieth century, Gwendolyn Brooks tended her own garden and became the first Black writer to win the Pulitzer Prize for her poetry collection, *Annie Allen* (1949). In this volume Brooks portrayed a Bronzeville woman whose odyssey is chronicled through the streets and kitchenettes of Chicago's South Side. In language that is richly clad in irony and indirection, Brooks confounded our expectation of the ordinariness of Annie's existence. With Annie Allen and the many other characters, we get, through Brooks's artistry, their perspectives on segregation, racism, nationalism, individualism, militarism, and many of the issues that complicate Black life in post-war America.

In 1994, when I honored Gwendolyn Brooks for her linguistic genius and Black poetic excellence, I chose fortuitously the phrase "furious flower" for the title of the conference because it ingeniously described not only the woman but also the literary era that she inspired:

The time
cracks into furious flower. Lifts its face
all unashamed. And sways in wicked grace.

"The Second Sermon on the Warpland," *Blacks* (p. 456)

Brooks and her contemporaries had witnessed a revolution in African American expression as newer, more radical voices took the stage and ushered in a period of Black self-determination, racial pride, and militancy. At this first historic Furious Flower conference, I saw four generations of Black poets and critics coming together

at James Madison University in the largest gathering of its kind. The miracle of this event was the magnificent bond that each poet experienced with the other poets. Toi Derricotte, poet and the co-founder of Cave Canem, in a note that she sent to me in November 2023 said, “In 1994 I saw something I had never seen before, all kinds of black poets meeting under the same roof, studying, loving each other, and working together...I felt the universe had shifted on its axis, and I told you so.” She could not have expressed better what so many of us felt: “we are each other’s magnitude and bond.”

Over the last thirty years, Furious Flower has effectively changed the universe of Black poetry in America. Through its anthologies, internationally distributed videos, its online presence, its readings and programs, the audience for Black poetry has grown as rapidly as its creators. I believe that is the strength of this new collection of online curricula called the *Furious Flower Syllabus: Opening the World of Black Poetry*. It is a way to calibrate the dramatic outpouring of poetry that comments on a world that is dangerously divided, yet ripe for peacebuilding, a world that is fractured by greed and exploitation, yet still greening with life and possibility. The collection is coming at a time when there is a concerted effort to rewrite Black history and erase Black culture. Yet this project, evidence of the harvest of Black poetry, is counterintuitive to this notion. This Syllabus Project is also the fulfillment of a vision that I had in 1994 to not only have a conference that would highlight the amazing poetic flowering evident in the final years of the twentieth century, but also to develop a series of critical essays, interviews and readings that would help teachers at all academic levels teach Black poetry in the future.

The Furious Flower Syllabus Project is a further iteration of this vision. The editors, McKinley E. Melton and Susan Facknitz, and more than twenty dedicated authors have teamed up to provide educational materials and lesson plans to help students at all levels engage in meaningful discussions about poetic forms, sensory language, writing history, writing identity, understanding contemporary life, and exploring the Black literary genius that Phillis Wheatley discovered in herself so many years ago. My sincere congratulations go out to all involved for the stellar job that they have done with the Furious Flower Syllabus Project. They have succeeded in creating a publication that will grow poets and open minds to the world of Black poetry that awaits them.

Joanne V. Gabbin, Ph.D.

Founder of the Furious Flower Poetry Center

Professor Emerita at James Madison University

INTRODUCTION

“A syllable is a brick”: Poetry Pedagogies to Build from our History, Meet our Moment, Prepare for our Future

By Lauren K. Alleyne and McKinley E. Melton

In September of 2022, at the annual Furious Flower Advisory Board in-person meeting in Harrisonburg, VA, we raised the question of a board-led initiative that would both support the Center’s mission around the celebration, education, and preservation of Black poetry and serve as a buildup to the 2024 Furious Flower Poetry Conference. As we discussed what shape such an initiative might take, we looked to Furious Flower’s history for guidance. The Center’s legacy of publications, including the groundbreaking video anthologies, the three Furious Flower print anthologies (*The Furious Flowering of African American Poetry* (1999), *Furious Flower: African American Poetry from the Black Arts Movement to the Present* (2004), and *Furious Flower: Seeding the Future of African American Poetry* (2019)), as well as the Center’s archival collection of audio-visual material on Black Poets, offered a starting point. We also considered congruity with the Center’s ongoing programming. The week-long Furious Flower Summer Legacy Seminar, one of the Center’s most unique programs, served as a promising model. The Legacy Seminar, offered every other year, is two-pronged: it celebrates a distinguished poet while also encouraging and empowering educators to teach the work of that poet. Historically, participants interact with and learn about the featured poet, and throughout the week they work in groups to produce lesson plans for use in their various classrooms. This ultimately became the inspiration for our initiative.

The idea was that we would create, in the tradition of so many other kinds of “syllabus” projects, a Furious Flower Syllabus that would highlight both the legacy of Black poetry and showcase the role that Furious Flower has played in building and sharing it since the first conference in 1994. Our focus was on accessibility and empowerment—this would be a free resource and one that would be useful to educators working at all levels and in all contexts. We wanted to provide tools for anyone who wanted to engage the work of Black poets. And so *The Furious Flower Syllabus Project: Opening the World of Black Poetry* (also known as #FuriousFlowerSyllabus) was born.

The idea quickly moved into the realm of reality when we received a generous grant to support the project. With a one-year timeline to produce our deliverable, we began. We decided to winnow our scope, limiting the focus of the project to the most recent Furious Flower anthology, *Furious Flower: Seeding the Future of African*

American Poetry, with its 100+ poets providing a generous pool of work from which to build the materials. We knew we wanted to include expertise from the various levels of pedagogy and to invite as many folks as possible to have a seat at this table we were building. We reached out to our networks, made the invitations, and celebrated each positive response.

Despite the digital possibilities of our moment, we knew the power of gathering, and so the week of June 18-23, 2023, our invited participants made their way to Harrisonburg, VA. For each of those days, we worked joyfully and diligently. Poems floated through the air, riding on laughter or silence. There was dancing. We learned from each other, from the work, and even from the audiences we were envisioning, as we made room for what they (you) might want to say.

This project began with the idea of an “open-access syllabus.” Yet, what developed through the collaborative efforts of our participants was so much more. While there is still an exemplary syllabus, this document is complemented by individual lesson plans, assignment guidelines, classroom exercises, analytical as well as creative writing prompts, and a wide array of resources that will inform the way that educators approach the teaching of Black poetry in a variety of contexts. Ultimately, the central consideration for every resource included in this project was “utility.” How can these materials be put to use in order to support the efforts of educators who understand the potential of Black poetry? How might these materials prove useful in equipping teachers who are teaching Black poetry for the very first time? How might these resources be utilized to energize even the most seasoned of instructors by providing innovative strategies and new approaches to engaging students in the world of Black poetry?

At the heart of the project is, indeed, a Furious Flower Syllabus, titled “Flowering Furiously: Contemporary Black Poetry and Poetics.” The syllabus, designed for an introductory undergraduate course—but scalable to all levels—invites students to consider how Black poets use their work to write about themselves, their experiences, and their communities. The primary resource for the syllabus is indeed the 2019 anthology of poems and essays, *Furious Flower: Seeding the Future of African American Poetry* (eds. Gabbin and Alleyne). However, the document also asks participants to engage with a range of materials through the inclusion of hyperlinks to online resources, including many from Furious Flower’s digital archives, as well as the earlier anthologies edited by Dr. Joanne V. Gabbin, *The Furious Flowering of African American Poetry* and *Furious Flower: African American Poetry from the Black Arts Movement to the Present*.

The use of Furious Flower resources, available in print as well as digitally, links the various materials collected within this project, demonstrating the wide breadth of the Center’s activities over the years with materials that are suitable for all ages and learning contexts. Among the collected resources is a multi-session unit plan developed for middle school students, “Food for Bonding, Food for Resistance,” that invites 7th and 8th grade students to develop greater facility with strategic uses for poetic devices, engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, and draw connections between different Black poets through a thematic

emphasis on food and culture. Furious Flower resources also make possible a unit plan for high school students that emphasizes “Individual and Collective Nationalities in Poems,” and lesson plans for “The Poetics of Childhood” and “The Poetics of Grace” for graduate-level seminars. Moreover, though each document was designed with a particular target audience in mind, we invite educators to approach the materials as adaptable and scalable to the learning level of their students.

The materials collected are not oriented solely toward “traditional” spaces of formal education, designed with curricular expectations and academic learning objectives at the forefront, but also include resources for community centers and public learning spaces. There are plans for multi-session gatherings in spaces such as libraries, youth centers, and assisted living facilities, ranging from two days to programming designed to span a full week. With each effort, #FuriousFlowerSyllabus creators sought to curate resources that would prove easily adaptable to the context in which the programs were offered and would address the ways that Black poetry can speak to the existence of the participants: whether adolescents working to articulate “The Pieces of Me,” adults pursuing wellness through programs such as “Restorative Practices: Healing After Incarceration,” or senior citizens exploring “Storytelling Poetics: Remembering and (Re)Imagining.”

The creators of the #FuriousFlowerSyllabus materials also recognized that syllabi—and plans for multi-session units and individual lessons—would need to be complemented by a collection of resources that could supplement what educators and workshop leaders may already be doing in their classrooms and community programs. A variety of exercises, writing prompts, and assignment guidelines are included for educators and workshop leaders to incorporate into ongoing learning experiences. Examples include “Intersectional Identity and Poetic Devices,” an exercise designed for an undergraduate classroom, a series of writing exercises for young adults titled “Writing the Body,” and a lesson plan titled “Fresh Ideas for the First Day of Class” designed to jump-start a graduate seminar. In every instance, project collaborators sought to design and develop materials that would have utility for anyone and everyone who accesses this work, whether modeling an entire semester or multiple weeks on the materials collected here, or incorporating particular documents into the structure of already imagined courses.

The contributors to this project were energized throughout the entire creative process by a core motivation: these materials are meant for educators to make use of them in productive and rewarding ways. The resources created and collected for this project are designed to live beyond this space, to be accessed and utilized in classrooms and learning environments where educators and their students will find them useful, where Black poetry can facilitate teaching and learning—advancing the uniquely powerful work of equipping students with a language to articulate their world.

We also questioned the moment: what meaning and impact could such an initiative have for the academy, in our society? In the wake of diminishing institutional support for the humanities and the arts? In a political climate that is historically revisionist and openly hostile to teaching the true experiences of Black and other

marginalized folks in the United States? As an artform produced by people for whom reading and writing was forbidden and illegal, Black poetry is both essential and miraculous. More importantly, it has always been simultaneously artistically and socially engaged—using the tools of literary craftsmanship and engaging with the civic, political, and societal questions within which it is created.

The challenges to teaching the work of Black poets, however, are both individual and institutional. On the one hand, willing educators may not feel they have the training or subject knowledge to handle the cultural/political dimensions of the work, or they may not be comfortable teaching poetry itself. Across the country, libraries are being divested of books by marginalized authors, including Black writers; political policies are restricting what can be taught in the classroom under the bogey of “Critical Race Theory;” and students are having the possibilities for their learning curtailed by manufactured fears of “divisive concepts.” Although the headlines pulse with a sense of immediacy, organized efforts toward the erasure of Black lives, voices, and experiences are not new. Addressing this pedagogical need has been a longstanding goal of the Center, and reflects powerfully the mission that both informed Furious Flower’s founding and continues to energize its work today.

In considering the interrelationship of the artistic, the social, and the political, we turn to the arc of Furious Flower’s efforts more broadly and, specifically, to the most recent anthology, which informs and undergirds the materials collected within the Furious Flower Syllabus Project. The opening essay of the anthology by recently departed scholar, critic, and longtime friend of Furious Flower, historian John H. Bracey, Jr., entitled “Communities and Social Movements in Black Poetry,” expounds upon “selected poems that had the greatest impact on defining my understanding of my place in the world and on the movements that I chose to participate in” (5). As Bracey recounts tales of learning, reciting, and internalizing the words of various poems through his childhood and his development into young adulthood in Washington, D.C., he emphasizes the educational spaces in which he encounters the work of Black poets: Lucretia Mott Elementary School, Benjamin Banneker Junior High School, Roosevelt High School, and Howard University. He explicitly recalls how “my social, educational, political, and cultural environment had as its purpose preparing me to be ready to fight to open doors and to be ready to succeed once I got in. The poems, the songs, the sermons, the speeches, and my classes were all a part of that preparation” (6). Indeed, the materials collected within this project are also designed with the same spirit and ethos in mind: preparation. We hope this resource prepares educators and students to engage history, meet the present moment, and build the future—inspired and empowered by the words of Black poets.

To say that this project has already exceeded the expectations that accompanied its genesis as an idea at that September 2022 Board meeting would be an understatement. Still, we anticipate that this work will continue to yield many dividends in the years to come, as the materials collected here are adopted and incorporated into classrooms and learning environments that we haven’t yet imagined. As we recognize the limits of our ability to

estimate where this project will go, we reflect instead on where this project began. We invite you to make use of what has been constructed here and to realize the potential of what exists in these pages. In so doing, we think of the powerful closing words of Fred Joiner's "To the Builders" (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 52):

we build to leave
the world different
than how we enter,

leave evidence.

a syllable is
a brick.
a single inked word on
a page is a monument
 in the face of
a white horizon
 meant to erase
us.

"WHOLLY ONE: STILL (A CENTO FOR FURIOUS FLOWER)"

During the week of the Syllabus Project, we curated a variety of ways for participants to engage with poetry, not only as scholars and teachers, but as its students and as its makers. We also sought ways to build community through a collective investment in the experience as well as the product.

The cento is a communal poetry form in which each person contributes a line from an existing poem, and the lines are assembled to create a new poem. Throughout the week, we invited participants to select their favorite lines from the poems they engaged with in the *Furious Flower: Seeding the Future of African American Poetry* anthology. At the end of the week, Advisory Board members Meta DuEwa Jones and McKinley E. Melton assembled "Wholly One: Still (a cento for Furious Flower)." On the last day, a communal reading of the cento closed the week's events with an experience that emblemized the community, conversations, and connections we had built over the course of the previous week.

Who was she?

The one in the forgotten African language where we could have said exactly what we meant
for she is a holy one

Out here the surf rewrites our silences.
for worship. maybe my mother's coffee cup with lipstick
the voice dynamic, masterful like hieroglyphics
Justice is not a pendulum it is not a hammer it is not a bandage

What god can unlatch its jaw and swallow me whole?
What wasn't trouble
I troubled.

yeah girl. And it happened, feeling a rogue breeze
pump fake & fast break must be breakfast brown

And I don't think for a second that we won't survive this.
the red doves tumbling from the torsos—the bodies
Calluses fuse into a leather of endurance.

This is how we share our secrets now
Together, we bake everyday pains into guilty pleasures.
his neck. My skin, my flesh, its power of resistance
To entirely finish is water entering water.

What is it you need when you're fleeing your home?
my woman, I name her as if she is mine,
an engine.

The field widens before it clichés.

Justice is not a pendulum it is not a hammer it is not a bandage
we are fabulous.
& we still are.

"WHOLLY ONE: STILL" ANNOTATED

Who was she?^[1]

The one in the forgotten African language where we could have said exactly what we meant^[2]
for she is a holy one^[3]

Out here the surf rewrites our silences.^[4]
for worship. maybe my mother's coffee cup with lipstick^[5]
the voice dynamic, masterful like hieroglyphics^[6]
Justice is not a pendulum it is not a hammer it is not a bandage^[7]

What god can unlatch its jaw and swallow me whole?^[8]
What wasn't trouble
I troubled.^[9]
yeah girl. And it happened, feeling a rogue breeze^[10]
pump fake & fast break must be breakfast brown^[11]

And I don't think for a second that we won't survive this.^[12]
the red doves tumbling from the torsos—the bodies^[13]
Calluses fuse into a leather of endurance.^[14]

This is how we share our secrets now^[15]
Together, we bake everyday pains into guilty pleasures.^[16]
his neck. My skin, my flesh, its power of resistance^[17]
To entirely finish is water entering water.^[18]

What is it you need when you're fleeing your home?^[19]
my woman, I name her as if she is mine,^[20]
an engine.^[21]

The field widens before it clichés.^[22]

Justice is not a pendulum it is not a hammer it is not a bandage^[23]
we are fabulous.^[24]

& we still are.^[25]

- [1] "Another Clearing of the Land" – Tara Betts (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 85) – Selected by Jim Smethurst
- [2] "90 poems I didn't write for you" – Alexis Pauline Gumbs (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 38) – Selected by Dave Wooley
- [3] "For Sister Gwen Brooks" – Sonia Sanchez (*Furious Flower*, 2004 p. 65) – Selected by Carmin Wong
- [4] "Hands" – Safiya Sinclair (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 305) – Selected by Shauna M. Morgan
- [5] "which art? which fact?" – Nate Marshall (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 58) – Selected by Paul Somers
- [6] "Boxing Arethas–thinking of the Queen of Soul" – Curtis L. Crisler (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 34) – Selected by Adrienne Danyelle Oliver
- [7] "Let My Anger Be the Celebration We Were Never Supposed to Have" – Natasha Oladokun (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 118) – Selected by Lauren K. Alleyne
- [8] "Exit Wound." – Kevin Simmonds (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 267) – Selected by Teri Ellen Cross Davis
- [9] "Aeration" – Taylor Johnson (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 109) – Selected by Tyree Daye
- [10] "When the Therapist Asks You to Recount, You Have to Say It" – Aricka Foreman (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 100) – Selected by Angel C. Dye
- [11] "#notorious" – T'ai Freedom Ford (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 99) – Selected by Hayes Davis
- [12] "I Don't Think for a Second That We Won't Survive This" – Abdul Ali (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 21) – Selected by Dana Williams
- [13] "Preacher Crow's Sermon on the Ark of Bones" – Dexter L. Booth (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 165) – Selected by allia abdullah-matta
- [14] "How the Body Remembers" – Darlene Anita Scott (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 264) – Selected by Mary Beth Cancienne
- [15] "Girl with the golden contacts at the Walmart" – Opal Moore (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 115) – Selected by Susan Facknitz

- [16] "Bread Pudding Grandmamma" – Darrel Alejandro Holnes (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 47) – Selected by T.J. Hendrix
- [17] "To the Old Square" – Chanda Feldman (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 192) – Selected by L. Renee
- [18] "Aubade" – Amber Flora Thomas (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 307) – Selected by Shameka Cunningham
- [19] "We Put So Much Faith in the Power of Doors" – Jacqueline Jones LaMon (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 55) – Selected by L. Lamar Wilson
- [20] "Night" – Reginald Dwayne Betts (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 83) – Selected by Leona Sevick
- [21] "How I Wish I Could Be as Happy as Zaytoven Playing Piano for Gucci on NPR, Tiny Desk" – Nabila Lovelace (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 252) – Selected by Anastacia-Renee
- [22] "If not memory–" – Taylor Johnson (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 110) – Selected by Ariana Benson
- [23] "Let My Anger Be the Celebration We Were Never Supposed to Have" – Natasha Oladokun (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 118) – Selected by McKinley E. Melton
- [24] – Selected by Meta DuEwa Jones
- [25] "which art? which fact?" – Nate Marshall (*Furious Flower*, 2019 p. 58) – Selected by Brian Hannon

PART I

FURIOUS FLOWER SYLLABUS

"Black poetry feeds us."

– Tyree Daye



1.

FLOWERING FURIOUSLY: CONTEMPORARY BLACK POETRY AND POETICS

Authors: Anastacia-Reneé, Ariana Benson, Leona Sevick, James Smethurst

Target Group: Intro undergraduate poetry course

NOTE: These are modular units that can be rearranged, reordered, and adjusted as the instructor sees fit.

Unit Title: Writing the “I”—Self, Identity, Legacy

Unit Objective

Students will learn different strategies poets employ to write about themselves: their lives, memories, experiences, and histories. Students will also understand various ways to write selfhood beyond the reliance on the pronoun “I.”

Day One: Writing the “I”—exploring personhood, the internal, life experiences, family histories; what makes you uniquely you

- Read these two poems:
 - “self-portrait with no flag” by Safia Elhillo (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 36-37) “I” poem
 - “Fish Fry” by Remica Bingham-Risher (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 28)
- Discuss: How do the poets resist overreliance on the “I” while still writing about the self. Consider the variations/similarities in form.
- Complete the following reading exercise: Look for the pronouns in “self-portrait” and “Fish Fry”
- Consider and discuss the following questions:
 - How are they used differently?
 - Is there any change throughout the poem (from one stanza to the next, from the beginning of the

poem to the end)?

- What is the writer trying to accomplish?
- Notice the active “I” vs. the observing “I”

Day Two: Writing the “Identity”—exploring belonging to groups (racial, ethnic, gendered, generational, etc.), cultures

- Read these two poems:
 - “For the Dead Homie” by Danez Smith (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 130-132)
 - *in comparison to “Fish Fry”—identity*
 - “My Resistance is Black” by DéLana R. A. Dameron (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 187)
- Discuss: form—what is this? Is this a poem? What do you make of the big spaces in the poem?
 - *It’s an “I” and “you” poem*
- [Writing Prompt](#)

Day Three: Writing the “Legacy”—exploring poetic/ personal lineages, global histories/events, ancestors; i.e. which stories have made yours possible?

- Read these two poems:
 - “Sure, You Can Ask Me about Hip-Hop” by Alan W. King (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 244-245)
 - “The Root” by Derrick Weston Brown (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 87-89)
- Discuss
 - *Learning how to teach an “I” poem; use [Diane Burns’ “Sure you can ask me a personal question”](#)*
 - *Legacy and form – [haibun](#)*
- Writing exercise: Have students turn what they’ve written from the [above prompts](#) into a haibun

Day Four/Conclusion: How can all the kinds of written “I” work together in one poem?

- Read these two poems:
 - “Let My Anger Be the Celebration We Were Never Supposed to Have” by Natasha Oladokun (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 118)
 - *legacy; do with recordings of Hughes, Brooks, Baraka...*

- “I Can’t Go For That (No Can Do)” by avery r. young (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 143)
 - *writes about I, identity, and legacy—all three! Can also talk about form*
- Revision exercise: Have students “flip” their haibun—rewrite the poem beginning with the last sentence, then the second-to-last sentence, and so on... until the entire poem is flipped
 - *try it with the haiku as well!*

Visuals:

- [Amiri Baraka and Askia Touré Furious Flower](#)
- [Gwendolyn Brooks at JMU](#)

Unit Title: Writing History

Unit Objective

To educate students on the legacy, importance, purpose, and craft elements of the “history poem” (in all its forms and variations) in the context of contemporary Black poetry.

Day One: Fundamental Elements of the Black “history poem” (not to be confused with the “Black History poem”)

- Read these works:
 - [“Middle Passage” by Robert Hayden](#)
 - *To be read before class and in class at beginning*
 - Essay: “Consciousness, Myth, and Transcendence: Symbolic Action in Three Poems on the Slave Trade” by Jon Woodson (*Furious Flowering* 1999, pp. 154-168)
 - *To be read before class: pp. 154-160; see discussion for specific teaching concepts related to this essay*
 - “The Apple Trees in Sussex” by Samuel Allen (*Furious Flower* 2004, pp. 14-15)
 - *To be read in class*
- Lecture: The Black “History” Poem—consciousness, myth, and transcendence
- Reading exercise: In three groups, have students re-read the Allen poem and have each group identify three examples of one fundamental element of the Black History Poem
 - *Either consciousness, myth, or transcendence—see below for more*
- Consider and discuss the following questions:

- How is consciousness working in the Allen poem?
- How is myth working in the Allen poem?
- How is transcendence working in the Allen poem?

Day Two: Writing Recorded/Public History

- Read these two poems:
 - “Bellocq’s Ophelia” by Natasha Trethewey (*Furious Flower* 2004, pp. 252-253), [media accompaniment](#)
 - “American Religion” by Lynne Procope (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 120-121)
- Discuss:
 - How do each of these poems utilize recorded and/or public histories (archival materials, current events, allusions to literary history, etc.) and to what effect?
 - What myths do each of these poems revise/undercut?
 - What is the argument of each poem—is it moral, emotional? What evidence does the poet use to support their argument?
- [Writing prompt](#)

Day Three: Writing Personal History

- Opening discussion—continuation from previous day’s writing prompt:
 - Have students share what they wrote and wrote about; brainstorm as a group how students can apply the elements of consciousness, myth, and transcendence to help write a “history poem.”
- Read these two poems:
 - “Early Death Syndrome” by Nandi Comer (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 95-97)
 - “Aeration” by Taylor Johnson (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 109)
- Discuss:
 - How do each of these poems engage personal history?
 - How do these poems employ metaphor to discuss public and recorded histories?
 - How do these poems allude to public histories, and how does the public inform the personal?
- Assignment: Have students write a history poem based on the previous day’s writing prompt, using the foundational elements of consciousness, myth, and transcendence.

Day Four: Conclusion Session (freestyle any combo of poems/discussion/assignments/activities)

- Opening activity—continuation from previous day’s assignment: Reading Salon
 - Have students volunteer to share their poems aloud, then have listening students give positive feedback about how the fundamental elements of a history poem appear in each student’s poem.
- Read these two poems:
 - “Candelabra with Heads” by Nicole Sealey (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 128-129)
 - [“In Defense of ‘Candelabra with Heads’” by Nicole Sealey](#)
- Watch together and discuss: [Video of Natasha Trethewey Reading at Georgia Perimeter College](#)
 - Activity: Have students re-read their poems backwards for line integrity, as Trethewey describes at 26:35 in the above video

Details for Lecture

Taking from Woodson’s essay, use the following excerpts to help students define and understand three fundamental elements of the Black “history poem”

Origin

Woodson developed this framework by analyzing Robert Hayden’s “Middle Passage”—he writes, “The most salient breakthrough that Hayden accomplished was the realization that whereas the ‘mythic histories,’ ‘the poems including history’ of Eliot, Pound, Crane, and Williams, fell outside of the concerns of most Americans, ‘mythical histories’ written for African Americans would necessarily find a captivated audience” (p. 155). Summary: **Hayden knew that there is a need for African Americans to have our own written histories recorded and that poetry is a medium through which to achieve this. It allows us to tell our own stories.**

Method and Purpose

“Hayden’s method is to present historical detail as though historical events compose a body of evidence that incriminated the slave traders, and, by extension, Western Christian Culture... the narratological consciousness that orders and presents the scenes soon becomes evident. What the poem musters as history must now be recognized as *argument*” (p. 156). Summary: **The history poem uses story to make an argument: it can work to undo certain historical narratives and/or it can reveal certain unexplored histories.**

Three Fundamental Elements of the History Poem

Consciousness:

- “The poem establishes a group/individual dialectic” (p. 158)—the poem is aware of prevailing ideas and/or opinions about a history/historical event and writes from either an individual or group perspective about this history
- “The poem avoids the direct engagement of moral problems by shifting the ground of its argument to the symbolic mode of agency” (p. 157)—the poem does not make direct statements about morality; instead, it allows its speakers, story images to act as symbols, and makes its argument through these symbols.
- Summary: **a history poem is conscious of the history that inspired it, and takes a unique perspective without telling readers directly what it thinks.**

Myth:

- “From Pound, Hayden derived the use of documents and the use of a ‘historic character who can be used as illustration of intelligent constructivity’” (p. 155)—the poem uses documented history as the foundation for its own myth.
- “‘Middle Passage’ has a deceptively simple structure: the poem consists of three sections, each of which tells a brief story” (p. 155)—the poem follows some kind of narrative structure to tell a story.
- “Hayden invokes a European text to indicate the moral failings of European culture... to allow European texts to voice a realization of European immorality undercuts... [a] dialectical articulation of history” (p. 159)—the poem undercuts and/or rewrites existing history.
- Summary: **a history poem uses old myth (history) and storytelling structure to create a new myth, written from a different perspective.**

Transcendence:

- “Hayden comments that his poem contains different voices—the voice of the poet that ‘at times...seems to merge with voices from the past, voices not intended to be clearly identified’ as well as voices of the traders, of the hymn-singers, and ‘perhaps even of the dead’” (p. 155)—the poem’s speaker is a hybrid of the poet and the voices of history—thus, it transcends time and space.
- “...wrestle with issues of power and forgiveness and betrayal and reconciliation” (p. 158)—the poem is concerned with larger issues and emotions, beyond those of the inspiring myth—it transcends history itself.
- “Hayden’s employment of myth... [forces] him to **shift historical factuality into mythmaking**” (p. 159, emphasis added)—the poem makes story of history.

- Summary: a **history poem uses past and present voices and grander ideas about humanity to retell history through the lens of emotion and truth.**

Importance/Conclusion

“...his subject is not artworks but lives: it is **the lives of the past that he wishes to commemorate, the living of the present that he wants to inspire, and the lives of the future that he wants to ensure...** it treats issues of morality, history, and cultural identity in a balanced way, while also managing to construct a myth that resonates authentically” (p. 167, emphasis added).

The Black history poem is a tool for giving voice to unvoiced pasts, for educating present readers about those obscured histories and inspiring reflection on past mistakes/moral failings and/or joys and achievements.

Unit Title: Writing Black Power: Black Arts to the present (60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, present)

Unit Objectives

To learn and discuss the formal and thematic legacies of political and cultural movement in Black poetry from the Black Arts era to Black Lives Matter.

Part One

Introductory Reading:

Read the essay “Communities and Social Movement in Black Poetry” by John H. Bracey (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 5-20)

- Read these two poems:
 - “I Wish You Black Sons” by Glenis Redmond (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 122-124)
 - “Preface to a Twenty-Volume Regicide Note” by Joshua B. Bennett (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 24-26)
- Discuss: What is the relation between individual and group identities?
- Reading exercise: List moments where different generations are expressed in the poem.
- Consider and discuss the response to the above activity.
- Media: [Sonia Sanchez reading “Just Don’t Never Give Up on Love”](#)

Part Two

- Read these two poems:
 - “A Reckoning: Assata in 1980” by DaMaris B. Hill (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 198)
 - “My Resistance Is Black” by DéLana R.A. Dameron (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 187)
- Discuss: What is the relation between individual and group liberation?
- Writing prompt: Write a version of one of the poems in which the verb tenses are changed. How does that change the meaning/feel of the poem?
- Consider and discuss the response to the above activity.
- Media: [Askia Touré and Amiri Baraka conversation](#)

Part Three

- Read these two poems:
 - “Symphony of Soul” by Candace G. Wiley (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 268-269)
 - “Boxing Arethas” by Curtis L. Crisler (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 34)
- Discuss: How are past, present, and future represented? How are they linked or separated?
- Assignment: Find moments/places in one of the poems in which identity/identities are sounded.
- Consider and discuss the response to the above activity.
- Media: [Jayne Cortez reading “I See Chana Pozo”](#)

Part Four

Conclusion Session (freestyle any combo of poems/discussion/assignments/activities)

Watch and discuss [“I Am” by Amiri Baraka](#)

Unit Title: Forms Received and Not

Unit Objective

Introduce students to the received and manipulated forms used by Black poets

Day One

- Read these two texts: *students read Shockley's essay before class; have multiple students Betts' poem out loud in class*
 - Excerpt from Evie Shockley's essay "Race, Experiments, and the Black Avant-Garde" (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 74-79)
 - "When I think of Tamir Rice While Driving" by Reginald Dwayne Betts (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 157-159)
 - *Tercets*
 - See also: [Furious Flower presents R. Dwayne Betts](#)
- Discuss:
 - Shockley's observations on received forms and Black poets' responses to them.
 - Betts' use of tercets as a form; how does the tercet form serve the poem?
- Reading exercise:
 - Shockley suggests in her essay that Black resistance can take shape in the use of and departure from received forms. Think about Betts' poem in relation to Shockley's observations and write briefly about how the structure of the poem is in conversation with the theme of resistance.
 - Turn and talk with a partner.
 - Be prepared to share out with the class.

Day Two

- Read these two poems (*have students read the poems before class and read the poems out loud in class*):
 - "The Root" by Derrick Weston Brown (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 87-89)
 - *Haibun*
 - See also: [Furious Flower Facebook Live presents Derrick Weston Brown](#)
 - "For the Dead Homie" by Danez Smith (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 130-132)
 - *Crown of sonnets with variation*
 - [See also](#)
- Discuss (think, pair, share):
 - What is the effect of the haibun on the reader? What purposes does this particular form serve?
 - What effect does the crown of sonnets have on the reader? How does repetition function in this poem? How are each of the sonnets related to one another outside the shared line?
- [Homework Assignment](#)

Day Three

- Read these two poems:
 - “American Counting Rhyme” by Duriel E. Harris (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 102-106)
 - *Poem as song*
 - “Activism is hot just ask Jason Momoa” by Khadijah Queen (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 61)
 - *Prose poem*
 - See also: [The Fight & The Fiddle: Khadijah Queen on Voice](#)
- Discuss:
 - How can we describe these works as poems?
 - Is Harris’s poem both a song and a poem?
 - Is a prose poem different from short or flash fiction? How does this form support Queen’s poetic subject?
- [Writing prompt](#)

Day Four: Conclusion Session

- Students share out their reflections or reimagined poetic forms from the previous three days.
 - Give students a brief peer survey (electronic) to fill out for each reader/participant:
 - Did the reflection/reimagined poetic form urge you to think more deeply about the material? How?
 - Was the presentation thoughtful and engaging? How so?
 - What recommendations for amplification or development would you suggest?
- Open for discussion and feedback.

Media resources

[Glossary of poetic terms and forms](#)

Unit Title: Gender

Unit Objective

Engage students in exploration and reflection on the use of gender in Black poetry.

Day One

- Read these two poems:
 - “Gender Reveal” Amanda Johnston (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 51)
 - “Of Being Sick and Tired” Ama Codjoe (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 235-236)
- Discuss: What is your definition of gender, or how do you define gender expression? Think about the role of gender and gender expression in the poems.
- Reading exercise: Read each poem.
- Consider and discuss the following questions:
 - How does the speaker in each poem convey womanhood?
 - How does the tone in “Gender Reveal” differ from the tone in “Of Being Sick and Tired?”

Day Two

- Read these two poems:
 - “Mother” Reginald Dwayne Betts (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 27)
 - “I Wish You Black Sons” Glenis Redmond (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 122-124)
- Discuss
- Writing prompt:
 - Reimagine and rewrite one section of one of the poems with “father” instead of “mother”
 - Reimagine and rewrite one section of the other poem free of gender
- Consider and discuss the following questions:
 - What systemic or traditional attributes are ascribed to “women?”
 - What systemic or traditional attributes are ascribed to “men?”
 - What happens when you erase gender from the poems?

Day Three

- Read these two poems:
 - “Tapping at Mama’s Knees” by Cynthia Manick (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 253-254)
 - “Girl with the golden contacts at the Walmart” by Opal Moore (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 114-116)
- Discuss:
 - How do the writer’s specific images shape Manick’s poem?
 - What is the role of relationships between women in each poem?
 - How does each poem tackle memory and listing as part of the format?
 - How does the format of the poem on the page support the vivid imagery of the poems?

- Assignment: Write a poem about a mother or sister that uses concrete images to evoke the five senses in exploring family and gender. Consider how to use the white space on the page to reinforce meaning.

Day Four: Conclusion Session Share Out and Introduction to Workshop

- Assignment/activity: Divide students into small groups. Students will choose one original poem to share with the class and read that poem to the small group first to receive constructive peer feedback.

Feedback formula:

- Positive or affirming statement.
- One question about the poem.
- Ask the poet if they have any questions or desire specific feedback.
- Give requested feedback.
- One constructive note or suggestion.
- Second positive or affirming statement.

Media resources/Visuals

- [MacArthur Foundation: Reginald Dwayne Betts](#)
- [Gender Terminology Guide](#)

Unit Title: Writing Queerness

Unit Objective

Compare, interrogate, discuss and annotate poems to explore voice, point of view, and multiple layers of writing queerness as it relates to form, memoir, vivid imagery, championing justice, grief, and relationships.

Day One

- Read these two poems:
 - “90 Poems I Didn’t Write For You” by Alexis Pauline Gumbs (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 38-41)
 - “Praise Poem For My Leo Self” by JP Howard (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 49-50)

- Discuss: List Poem as a poetic device*
- Writing Prompt: Make a list of five of your favorite things. For two of the items on your list, explain at length what makes them your “favorite” in 2-3 short sentences.
- [Writing Assignment](#)
- Reading exercise:
 - Read the above poems
 - Consider and discuss the following questions:
 - What is the role of conversation and dialog in the poems?
 - In what ways are the poets using the first-person point of view in poems?
 - How does format on the page support or shape the poem’s subject matter?
 - How do pop culture and media impact or support the poems?

**List Poem: A list poem is a deliberately organized poem containing a list of images or adjectives that build up to describe the poem’s subject matter through an inventory of things.*

Day Two

- Read these two poems *before class*:
 - “Loni, with a martini and sapphire balls,” by Arisa White (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 310)
 - “Discipline” by Phillip B. Williams (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 311)
- Watch [Phillip B. Williams reading “Discipline”](#)
- Discuss: Prose Poetry* vs. Short Poems
- Writing prompt: Think of an “event” or “moment” where you felt your life changed, shifted or felt different. List the details of that moment. Be as descriptive as you can.
- Writing assignment: The haibun**
 - Consider and discuss the following questions:
 - What do we know about Loni in White’s poem?
 - What isn’t said explicitly in both White’s and Williams’ poem?
 - How does format on the page support or shape the poem’s subject matter?

**Prose Poem: A prose poem is a poem written in several sentences and blocked text.*

***Haibun Poem: A haibun is a hybrid form of poetry from Japan which appears in format as a popsicle and is composed of combined poetry and haiku. The anatomy of a haibun poem is a block of nonfiction and ends with a haiku or a tanka. The haibun often begins with the event, action, or jolt and is less concerned with the lead up to the event, action, jolt or a-ha moment.*

Day Three

- Read these poems:
 - “When the Therapist Asks You to Recount, You Have To Say It” by Aricka Foreman (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 100-101)
 - “Conditions for a Southern Gothic” by Rickey Laurentiis, (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 56)
 - “Initiation” by Kamilah Aisha Moon, (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 59)
- Discuss: The role of grief as a main character or driving force.
- Writing Prompt: Write your definition of grief as if you were explaining it to a very young child.
- Assignment: Epistolary poems*
- Consider and discuss the following questions:
 - How do both Moon and Foreman tackle grief?
 - How does Laurentiis’s use of format and inserting a list in “Conditions for a Southern Gothic” add complexity to the poem?

**Epistolary Poem: An epistolary poem, also called a verse letter or letter poem, is a poem in the form of an epistle or letter. The epistolary poem does not consist of any particular format or rhyme other than beginning with a salutation to the intended “receiver” of the letter.*

Day Four: Share Out and Introduction to Workshop

- Assignment/activity: Divide students into small groups. Students will choose one poem to share with the class and read that poem to the small group first to receive constructive peer feedback.

Feedback formula:

- Positive or affirming statement.
- One question about the poem.
- Ask the poet if they have any questions or desire specific feedback.
- Give requested feedback.
- One constructive note or suggestion.
- Second positive or affirming statement.

Media resources/Visuals

- [Alexis Pauline Gumbs](#)
- [Cynthia Manick](#)

- [JP Howard](#)
- [Aricka Foreman](#)
- [Rickey Laurentiis](#)
- [Kamilah Aisha Moon](#)
- [Phillip B. Williams](#)
- [Poets.org: “More than the Birds, Bees, and Trees: A Closer Look at Writing Haibun”](#)
- [Thanet Writers: “What is a List Poem?”](#)
- [Poets.org: Epistolary Poem](#)
- [Furious Flower Resources](#)

Unit Title: Writing Place

Unit Objective

Through this unit, students will engage with the idea of writing space—exploring poems that explore nature, the concept of home, locality/regionalism, and more—and will learn rhetorical strategies (figurative language, imagery, structure, etc.) that Black poets employ to write about place. Students will also understand “place” is determined not only by its present condition and/or inhabitants but also by the histories and pasts that lived within it, especially those that relate to racial and ecological concerns.

Day One: The Relativity of Place

- Read chapter before class:
 - Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, [“Former Inhabitants and Winter Visitors”](#)
- Discuss chapter:
 - How does the Walden essay demonstrate the relativity of place in relation to:
 - time/era
 - race/history
 - ecology/nature
 - What is the relation between nature and the built environment?
 - Is the built environment ever outside nature?
 - Is nature as it is experienced ever outside the built environment?
- In-class writing: Have students complete a short, two-part write-up:
 - Part one: explain how the Walden essay demonstrates the relativity of place in relation to either time/era, race/history, or ecology/nature.
 - Part two: consider a place you have seen change over time and how the relativity of place applies to

that memory

- Reading exercise—to do for homework: Find two poems/songs (eg. rap, music videos, etc.) by two different writers set in the same place. Compare and contrast the ways that place materializes in that work.
- Watch in class: [Dawn Lundy Martin – “Talking About New Orleans” by Jayne Cortez](#)

Day Two: Home as Place and Concept

- Read these two poems:
 - “self-portrait with no flag” by Safia Elhillo (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 36-37)
 - “which art? what fact?” by Nate Marshall (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 57-58)
- Watch these videos:
 - [The Fight & The Fiddle: Brenda Marie Osbey on New Orleans](#)
 - [The Fight & The Fiddle: Nate Marshall on Chicago](#)
- Discuss:
 - Compare and contrast the ways Elhillo and Marshall write about their respective homes. How do they use imagery, metaphor, form, etc. to depict their homes, both as a physical space and as a site of memory?
 - Think about home as a place. Is it a place of confinement? Is it a place of community support? What is its relation to past, present, and future?
 - Think about home beyond location—who is *home* for you? What does home smell like, feel like, sound like?
 - What is the difference between being *from* a place and a place you call *home*?
- Writing prompt, in-class: Write about home as a place—whether you consider your birthplace or another place your home. What is significant about this place; how has being rooted there shaped the journey of your life?
- Share responses and discuss as group
- Additional resource: [“The Site of Memory,” essay by Toni Morrison](#)

Day Three: Writing Region—the South in Black Poetry

- Read before class: [“Jericho Rising—How the push and pull of the South feed Louisiana native Jericho Brown’s soul-shaking, award-winning poetry”](#)
- Writing exercise: Write a list of 10 things the South means to you/makes you think of.
- Read these two poems in class:
 - “Say, Divine” by DeLana R.A. Dameron (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 186)

- “Conditions for a Southern Gothic” by Rickey Laurentiis (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 56)
- Watch video:
 - [Natasha Trethewey on Her Childhood in the South](#)
- Discussion: Return to your list of 10 ideas about the South and answer these questions:
 - After engaging with the poems we read, how did they compare to your concept of the South?
 - How do you think your idea of the South is influenced by time/era, race/history, and ecology/nature?
 - How do these ideas relate to the relativity of place? How has your life informed your opinion of the South?
 - What have you learned about how the South informs the poets’ (Dameron, Laurentiis, Trethewey, Brown) writing and perspective?

Day Four: Place, Nature, and the Imagined

- *Before class*: take a 15-20 minute walk outdoors (doesn’t necessarily have to be “in nature”) and write about the environment you observe.
- Read these two poems in class:
 - “Versal” by francine j. harris (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 239-240)
 - “Dew-Drier” by Dante Micheaux (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 113)
- Discuss the following questions:
 - How do harris and Micheaux use nature as a springboard towards imagination?
 - What parts of the places they wrote about do you think they really saw? Which parts do you think they imagined?
 - How do the ideas of relativity and place relate to the poems?
 - Would you consider either poem a Black “history poem” based on Woodson’s essay? Why or why not?
- In-Class Activity: Take the writing from your outside walk and add in imaginative elements, either based on what you saw, or something entirely new altogether. Discuss how your additions have changed the “place” you originally wrote about, and how they’ve changed the piece as a whole.

PART II

UNIT PLANS

"Black poetry has always been a site of resistance, creation, respite, solace, community, self-love. We're at a moment in history where that's more necessary than ever."

-Dave Wooley



2.

FOOD FOR BONDING, FOOD FOR RESISTANCE

Authors: Mary Beth Cancienne, Hayes Davis, Teri Cross Davis, Brian Hannon, TJ Hendrix

Target Group: Middle School (7th-8th grade)

About the Unit

This is a three-day poetry unit for 7th and 8th grade learners. The lessons have been planned for 90-minute blocks but can be broken up into 45-minute blocks. They can be taught together or separately as a one-or two-day workshop.

Common Core Standards (7th and 8th grade)*

Text Complexity

- Read and comprehend poems. (7)

Craft and Structure

- Determine an author's purpose in a text. (7)

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use (7 and 8)

- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings (interpret figurative language).
- Gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Range of Writing (7 and 8)

- Write routinely over **extended time frames** (time for **research, reflection, and revision**) and **shorter time frames** (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Comprehension and Collaboration (7 and 8)

- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse groups or teams on grade 7 and 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

* Please note that this language comes directly from state/national standards

By engaging with Black poetry, the students will:

Understand

- A poet uses poetic devices to capture experience.
- A poet arranges words to create meaning in a poem.
- A poet uses poetic devices to create meaning in a poem.
- Participation in group discussions provides an opportunity to learn from others, including unique viewpoints.

Know

- Identify and discuss an author's purpose (theme) in a poem.
- Examine poetic devices and structure, such as imagery, sensory details, repetition, alliteration, enjambment, and caesura and how they add meaning to the message of the poem (author's purpose).
- Interpret information presented in diverse media formats.
- Compare and contrast poems.

Do

- Modeling the structural form of either poem, write a poem using imagery, sensory details, and repetition.
- Revise using the writing process (first and second drafts, revision and editing, and peer reviews).

Poem	Themes	Devices	Craft
“Bread Pudding Grandmamma” by Darrel Alejandro Holnes	Pain Family Food Comfort Nourishment: individual (emotional, spiritual, physical) Maternal love	Sensory details Imagery Alliteration	Stanzas Enjambment Speakers other than the protagonist (multiple voices)
“My Resistance is Black” by DéLana R.A. Dameron	Nourishment: A Movement Maternal love Food Comfort Unsung heroes: people working behind the scenes	Imagery Repetition	Prose Poem Caesura

Food for Bonding (Day One)

Poem: “Bread Pudding Grandmamma” by Darrel Alejandro Holnes (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 47-48)

[Activities](#)

Additional Materials

- [Beads of Africa Color Chart](#)
- [Color Thesaurus](#)

Food for Resistance (Day Two)

Poem: “My Resistance is Black” by DéLana R.A. Dameron (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 187)

[Activities](#)

Food for Bonding & Food for Resistance (Day Three)

Poems: “My Resistance is Black” by DéLana R.A. Dameron, “Bread Pudding Grandmamma” by Darrel Alejandro Holnes

[Activities](#)

Options for Differentiation

- [Student Interviews](#)
- Peer Review and Peer Editing

Prompting Questions for Student Engagement

Student Interview Exercise

3.

THE PIECES OF ME: EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH POETRY

Authors: Shameka Cunningham, McKinley E. Melton, Adrienne Danyelle Oliver, Carmin Wong

Target Group: Young Adults, ages 16-18

Key Details

- Creative project-based workshop for a youth-oriented community group (YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, Teen Center, etc.)
- Five-day workshop (Monday-Friday), 90-minute sessions
- Each session focuses on a theme and a poetic craft element:
 - Monday (Ekphrasis) – Past & Future: “Where are you from? Where are you going?”
 - Tuesday (List Poem) – Private & Public: “What do others see? What do you show?”
 - Wednesday (Prose Poem) – Strengths & Opportunities: “Where am I strongest? Where do I have room to grow?”
 - Thursday (Concrete Poem) – Friends & Family: “Who are my people?”
 - Friday (Cento) – Collaboration & Teamwork: “How do I work with others to pursue my goals?”

Goals/Objectives

- Daily:
 - Select a poem in relation to the theme and discuss one craft element.
 - Provide a creative prompt that will allow students to produce something in relation to the theme and craft.
- Produce a collaborative creative project that allows each student to incorporate elements of themselves.

Accompanying Materials

- [Craft Worksheet](#)

Day One – “Where are You from? Where are You going?”

Theme: Past & Future

Craft Element: Ekphrasis

Poem: Natasha Trethewey’s [“Gesture of a Woman in Process”](#)

Prompt

Facilitator projects a photo or brings in printed photos. Ask students to write down five things they notice. Select one of the five things they noticed and create a backstory that tells us why it appeared in the picture.

Discussion

Explain to students what [Ekphrasis](#) is. Ensure they have an understanding of what it means, in their own words.

[Natasha Trethewey’s “Gesture of a Woman in Process”](#) from the Furious Flower Archive

- Play the video of Trethewey reading from 1994 (above).
- Distribute the poem, replay the video, and instruct students to follow along on the page.
- Guide a discussion of Trethewey’s poem.
 - Potential questions:
 - What does Trethewey’s language add to your consideration of the photograph?
 - What are some of the specific choices that Trethewey makes to “capture” and build upon elements of the photograph?
 - Are there things about the photograph that you notice Trethewey did not choose to emphasize?
 - How do the poem and the photograph, collectively, tell a particular story?
 - How does Trethewey engage the photograph as more than just a “frozen moment in time” (quote from [interview](#))?
 - A JSTOR account will be necessary to access the above interview link.

Creative Exercise (prompt)

- Invite students to scroll through their own phones (or otherwise stored photo album). Select a photo that captures a moment from their own not-so-recent past (aim for over two years old).
- Do they remember the backstory? Can they imagine a new one?
- On what elements should they focus to write an ekphrastic response?
- Invite them to:
 - Use vivid language to respond to their photograph.
 - Mirror elements and structure of Trethewey's poem:
 - In the foreground/background
 - Around them...
 - Even now/Even then...

If time allows, invite participants to share elements of what they have written.

Day Two – “What do Others See? What do you Choose to Show?”

Theme: Private & Public

Craft Element: List Poem

Poem: Danez Smith's [“alternate names for black boys”](#)

- [Furious Flower Presents Danez Smith](#) (opening 4:30 minutes, where Dr. Joanne Gabbin introduces Smith by referencing “alternate names for black boys”)

Essay (for facilitator):

- Weil, Eric A. “Personal and Public: Three First-Person Voices in African American Poetry.” (*Furious Flowering* 1999, pp. 223-238).

Prompt

Invite participants to consider alternatives for how they would describe themselves by asking them to complete a list of 5-10 phrases to complete a “List of Alternative Names for _____” (fill in blank with their own name).

Discussion

Explain what a [List poem](#) is.

Guided Questions (Prompt)

- If you could give yourself a different name, what would it be?
- How would you describe yourself in three words?
- How would you describe yourself when no one's around in one word?
- Who would you be in an alternate universe?
- Who would you be with no financial limitations or obligations?
- What genre of music would you use to describe your personality?
- What is your superpower? Real or imagined.
- Name a thing you love.
- Where is your favorite place to be?
- What scares you?
- What two words describe your opposite self? (Example: If you think of yourself as kind, “mean” would be the opposite)
- If you were an affirmation, what would it say?
- If you were a warning sign, what would it say?
- What three words describe your future self?
- What kind of plant would you be? What kind of animal would you be?
- What would your stage name be?
- How would you describe yourself as an image?

Day Three – “Where are you strongest? Where is there room to grow?”

Theme: Strengths & Opportunities

Craft Element: Prose Poem

Poem: Opal Moore’s [“Eulogy for Sister”](#) (*Furious Flower* 2004, pp. 198-199)

Opening exercise

Instructor asks participants:

- What are five qualities you see as your most noteworthy strengths?
 - Are these strengths that you believe others notice in you or that you notice in yourself?
 - Are these private or public strengths?
- What are five opportunities or things you want to accomplish in the coming year?

Instructor invites participants to pair/share.

Instructor says:

- Staying in those pairs, write down five things you want to get out of today's workshop and five things that you have taken away from workshops over the past few days. What have you learned about your working style, your creative ethic, and your relationship to poetry? Consider all the things you have in common. Consider the ways in which this workshop series has allowed you to grow or see yourself differently over the past few days.

Instructor invites participants to take turns sharing their pair discussions with the whole group, and encourages celebration and affirmation.

Instructor introduces participants to the following poetry terms:

- Narrative style
- Punctuation
- Line breaks (and lack thereof)
- Couplet

Instructor explains what a prose poem is and reads [one example](#) (from the Poetry Foundation page about prose poems).

- What is the difference between writing fiction and writing prose poetry?
- Consider what poetic features are used and relied on in this form.

Discuss Opal Moore's poem ["Eulogy for Sister"](#)

Discussion

- What is a eulogy?
- What are some narrative elements of the poem?
- How does the length of each sentence contribute to the pace and rhythm of the poem? Stanza/paragraph? And how does this reflect the style of a eulogy?

- What is the relationship or contrast between the longest and shortest lines of the poem?
- What is the significance of the word “Sister?” Consider how the speaker uses “Sister” as a proper noun instead of giving her a name. Who does Sister represent?
- What is the speaker’s relationship between medical healing and spiritual healing/prayer in this poem? How does this contribute to the eulogy form?
- The poem ends with two lines that have a significantly different tone than the stanza/paragraph before it. Who is the speaker talking to at the end? Consider the structure of the couplet form and the elements of poetic structure woven throughout the poem.

Creative Exercise (Prompt)

- In 2-3 sentences, identify a moment of fear, doubt, insecurity, or a personal weakness.
- Begin to write a stanza/paragraph or a few sentences declaring the death of that fear, moment of doubt, insecurity, or weakness.
- Guiding prompts:
 - What does your fear, doubt, or insecurity represent?
 - What prompted your fear, doubt, or insecurity?
 - Imagine your fear, doubt, or insecurity as a person. If you could talk to your fear, doubt, or insecurity, what would you say? What would be your tone of voice?
 - Imagine your fear, doubt, or insecurity as a physical object. What would it look like? Sound like? Feel like?
 - Try starting with the lines “We are gathered here today to say farewell to...”
 - Unlike writing an essay, try inverting the syntax of some sentences. How might ambiguity or intimacy impact the relationship between the speaker and their fear, doubt, or insecurity?
 - End with an affirmation of what’s next for the speaker.

Day Four: “Who are My People?”

Theme: Friends & Family

Craft element: Concrete poem

Poem: Raymond R. Patterson’s “Baobab” (*Furious Flower* 2004, p. 44)

Opening Exercise

- Who are your people? What does that mean to you?

- What images come to mind when you think about “your people?”
- Who is in your community of family and friends?

Discussion

- Explain Concrete Poetry
 - [Poetry Foundation](#)
 - [Poets.org](#)
- Explain the significance of the [Baobab](#)
 - “The magnificent baobab tree (*Adansonia digitata*) is an icon of the African continent. With bark and fruit offering over 300 life-sustaining uses, it is the root of many Indigenous remedies, traditions, and folklore. Hence its literal nickname, ‘The Tree of Life.’”
- Some potential questions:
 - What is the relationship between the content of the poem and the object that Patterson has depicted?
 - How does Patterson use “community-minded language?”
 - What is the relationship between family/community and nature in this poem?
 - What do we think about Patterson’s emphasis on “we/us” pronouns?
 - Consider Patterson’s use of “proper names” through capitalization. How does he create status/stature and emphasis throughout the poem?

Creative Exercise

- What images come to mind when you think about family? Keep that image in mind as you work your way through the poem.
- Goal One – Use vivid language to express the central focus of the poem.
- Goal Two – through revision, how can you shape the words on the page in order to reflect the image you had in mind?

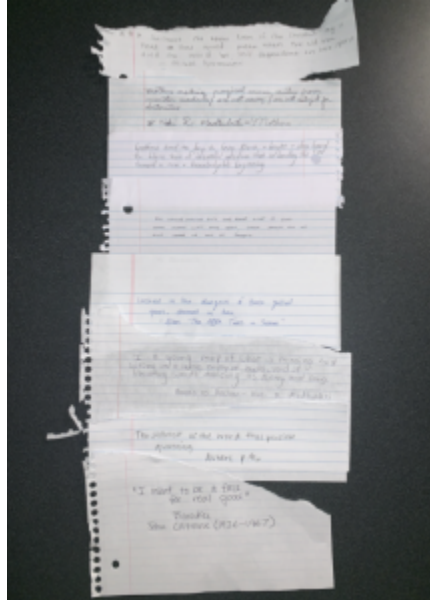
Day Five: “How do I work with others to pursue a goal?”

Theme: Collaboration & Teamwork

Craft: Cento

Poem: [“Wholly One: Still”](#)

Instructor opens by explaining the “[cento](#).”



From the [Furious Flower Archive](#)

Invite participants to reflect upon the week of themes and ideas. Which themes resonated most powerfully?

Allow 20 minutes to review poetry collections (provide scanned copies of Furious Flower poems or published works). Ask each participant to select a line that best reflects the theme that resonated with them.

Collectively, guide the participants through the creation of a cento:

- Have each line of poetry placed on its own piece of paper and have them arranged on a wall visible by the whole class.
- Read each line aloud, and invite students to begin by pairing lines that “make sense” to them in sequence.
 - With each “pairing,” ask students to offer a brief explanation as to why they’ve put specific lines together.
- As the lines take shape, always read aloud to ensure that there is general consensus about the order.
- As the order of lines comes into focus, develop general consensus about the structure of the stanzas, always reading aloud at each stage of development.
 - Invite students to think about sonic resonance, meaning, shifts, turns, etc.

Close with a reading of the collectively created cento. Invite students to consider:

- How do you see yourselves represented/reflected in the cento, as individuals?
- How do you see the community/collective reflected in the cento?

4.

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE NATIONALITIES IN POEMS BY ELHILLO, KAMARA, AND BURROUGHS

Authors: Mary Beth Cancienne, Hayes Davis, Teri Ellen Cross Davis, Brian Hannon, T.J. Hendrix

Target Group: High School

Learning Goals

- Introduce students to contemporary poetry that intentionally shares themes of identity, collective identity, patriotism, and activism.
- Provide a historical lens through which to view poetry (finding the real-life connections that fuel the work).

Common Core Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2 Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text...contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

Essential Questions for this Unit

- What symbols do we choose to represent ourselves?
- How do these poems use various parts of speech to develop their argument?
- What connections can you make between one of the poems and your life? What connections can we make across these three poems?

Understand, Know, Do (UKD) Learning Objectives

By engaging with Black poetry, the students will:

Understand

- Poetry is an artistic form of self-expression that captures experiences of the individual and collective identity and can evoke agency.
- Poetry by Black authors is varied and diverse and is infused in the wider worlds of poetry.
- Poetry by Black authors is embedded in the larger categories of poets and poetry.
- Participation in group discussions provides an opportunity to learn from others, including an opportunity to understand different viewpoints.
- Using multiple sources of information (fiction and nonfiction) produces a more complete understanding of a topic.

Know

- How to identify the key ideas of the poems, such as identity, collective identity, and patriotism.
- How to use textual clues to answer inferential questions and create meaning.
- How to compare and contrast poems to make thematic connections between the poems.
- How to evaluate the poet's use of grammar, usage, and mechanics and its impact on tone.
- How to analyze poems for poetry devices such as symbolism, structure ([haiku](#)), diction, allusion, and syntax to determine how they add meaning to the poem.
- How to interpret information presented in diverse media formats.

Do

- Create a pledge poem that includes rich diction (word choice) and the language of agency.

- Create a one-sentence poem that references one's culture and community.
- Create a love letter poem.
- Revise poems using a multi-step writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing).

Lessons

Day One – Safia Elhillo “self-portrait with no flag” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 36-37)

To begin this unit, lead students through a reading of the Elhillo poem and a discussion of what it means to make a *pledge*.

Activities (45-50 minutes)

Warm-Up: Present a flag to your students. Ask, “What is this? What does it represent?” Briefly discuss their answers. Instruct students to reflect in writing: *What does it mean to “pledge” yourself to a flag?* **(10 minutes)**

Read out loud or have students quietly read the [History of the Pledge of Allegiance](#) **(5 minutes)**

Quickly discuss “[symbolism](#)” after presenting its definition, using this question: “How might our feelings about a flag change depending on what it represents for us?” **(5 minutes)**

Read the poem “self-portrait with no flag” by Safia Elhillo aloud to the class, or play [this recording](#) (poem starts at 0:56). Next, ask for a student to read the poem, and ask the class to listen for the following: adjectives, verbs, nouns, punctuation, capitalization, and spaces/pauses. After the student reads the poem out loud, invite students to the board to annotate the poem based on what you asked them to listen for during the second reading. **(10 minutes)**

Hold a class discussion of the poem, focusing on these questions: **(10 minutes)**

- How do the parts of speech add to the tone of the poem?
- What does the lack of punctuation and standard capitalization contribute to the poem?
- What do the pauses (quickly define [Caesura](#)) in the poem add?

Ask your students to write using this prompt: Using the poem as inspiration, write your own poem about what you pledge allegiance to—what are the essential elements of your life you wish to honor? **(5-10 minutes)**

Resources

- [The Pledge of Allegiance](#)

- Recording: [Safia Elhillo “self-portrait with no flag”](#)

BREAK (or end of class period)

Day Two – Yalie Kamara “A Haiku Love Letter for Gabby Douglas” (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 53)

Today, lead students through a reading of the Kamara poem, focusing on representing a nation and the complication of that nation’s standards not aligning with our own or with the way we choose to present ourselves.

Activities (45 minutes)

Warm-Up: Ask students for three takeaways from the discussion from the day before—our notion of pledging ourselves to a flag. Tell them that during this lesson, we will ask a slightly different question: Who gets to represent America? **(5 minutes)**

Ask students to reflect quietly in writing using these questions as a prompt:

- Is there an image of a “typical” American?
- Is that image considered “beautiful?”
- What is included in that image?
- Does that image differ for different people?

Discuss their answers after they write. **(10 minutes)**

Ask students: What are the standards of beauty? Do those standards apply equally to everyone? Discuss their answers. **(5 minutes)**

Watch these videos of Olympic coverage and criticism of Gabby Douglas’ hair. **(5 minutes)**

- [Video One](#) (1:36)
- [Video Two](#) (2:45)

Ask students to turn to a partner and discuss their reactions to the videos. **(5 minutes)**

Read aloud “A Haiku Love Letter for Gabby Douglas,” or show this [video](#) of the poet reciting it, and then ask for a student to read the poem. After the second reading, ask students:

- What do the descriptions in the poem help you to see and/or imagine?
- What do you think about the poem?

- What do you wonder about the poem?

Discuss their answers **(10 minutes)**

Ask students to write about the connection between the fifth stanza/haiku and the poem “self-portrait with no flag.” **(5 minutes)**

Tell students that tomorrow’s lesson will ask them to continue “unpacking” the poem, define and discuss haiku, and draw connections between the two poems. Assign the articles: [“How Natural Black Hair at Work Became a Civil Rights Issue” by Chanté Griffin](#) and [“Gabby Douglas’ Hair Draws Criticism” by Jemele Hill](#) for homework.

Day Three: Kamara Continued

Today’s lesson will continue unpacking the Kamara poem, focusing on notions of otherness and rebellion against what traditionally gets defined as “American.”

Activities (45 minutes)

Distribute [this online worksheet](#) that students will use to analyze “Haiku Love Letter to Gabby Douglas.” Students will be asked to discuss three different elements of the poem (structure, diction, details, etc.) and how they contribute to Gabby’s expression of “rebellion” or “otherness” against what traditionally falls under the concept of “America.” **(20 minutes)**

When students are done with the worksheet, lead them in a discussion of the poem that surfaces the following:

- The poem’s form: “haiku”
- Literary/Poetic devices that are used in the poem.

Ask students to connect the articles that they read for homework to the poem. **(15 minutes)**

Ask students to write their own love letter to someone who they see as heroic and believe has been wronged in some way. Have them choose a specific person. **(10 minutes)**

Day Four: Kamara & Elhillo Paired

Today’s lesson will ask students to draw connections between the two poems they have studied during days 1-3.

***Before class,** print 3-4 copies of both poems from days one and two in large font (14-16 point), and mount both poems side by side on large Post-it pads in various locations around the room. Provide markers at each station.*

Activities (45 minutes)

Warm-Up: Divide the class into as many groups as you have locations of paired poems. Instruct students to, in their groups, move to one station, read the poems side by side, and annotate them based on the prompt “What thematic connections do you see between these two poems?” When they have finished annotating their own poems, instruct them to do a “gallery walk,” during which they read other groups’ annotations, noticing similarities and departures from their annotations. **(15 minutes)**

Have students return to their seats. Lead a discussion of the thematic connections between the two poems. **(10 minutes)**

Transition to CM Burroughs’ “Our People II” (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 91).

Ask students, “What is meant by the phrases ‘My people’ and/or ‘Our people?’” Discuss their answers. Next, ask them to write their reflections on the prompt, “How are individual and collective identities formed? Who would be **your** people?” Discuss their answers. **(10 minutes)**

Hand out copies of CM Burroughs’ “Our People II” (or project it on screen) and read it aloud. Next, ask a student to read the poem out loud. After the student reads the poem, ask the following questions:

- What do the descriptions in the poem help you to see and/or imagine?
- What do you think about the poem?
- What do you wonder about the poem?

Discuss their answers **(10 minutes)**

Inform students that tomorrow’s lesson will continue unpacking the poem and pair it with Gwendolyn Brooks’ poem “We Real Cool.” Assign [this essay](#) for homework.

Resources

- Article: “[How Natural Black Hair at Work Became a Civil Rights Issue](#)” by Chanté Griffin
- Article: “[Gabby Douglas’ Hair Draws Criticism](#)” by Jemele Hill
- Video: [I Am Not My Hair](#) India.Arie
- [The Crown Act Document](#)
- [Politics of Black Female Hair Document](#)

BREAK (or end of class period)

Day Five – CM Burroughs “Our People II” (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 91)

Activities (45 minutes)

Warm-Up: Show [this video](#). Ask students if they have done this dance or another dance that involves a room full of people doing similar dance moves. Ask them to brainstorm other group activities that are rooted in a particular culture and evoke a collective identity. **(10 minutes)**

Divide students into groups (or assign groups); provide a timing guideline and ask each group to answer one the following questions:

- What sense of collective identity does the speaker invoke? Find specific language, syntax, punctuation, etc. in the poem that speaks to the notion of a collective.
- Collective identities are sometimes built on shared culture. What culture(s) do the people in this poem share? Name specific examples. [Mecca](#) is an allusion in the poem. How is it used?
- What aspects of your culture are similar to the dances, gestures, food, phrases in this poem?
- Read the poem [“We Real Cool”](#) by Gwendolyn Brooks. How does this poem relate to Burroughs’ poem? What is the collective in Brooks’ poem? Is it a different collective from Burroughs’ poem?
- (*Optional*) Students can also be given this CM Burroughs quote to consider:
 - “Those [the poems “Our People I” and “Our People II”] were particular because I was writing toward Gwendolyn Brooks. It was a way to address her by imitating her gaze and her preoccupations with the we, the collective, and the collective concerns. I needed to be more inclusive in those poems, to try and articulate some larger truths or to assert truth that was in harmony with hers.” See the full interview [here](#).

After group work, lead discussion of the poem using the four questions; continue the discussion by asking students for their responses to the article they read for homework and the question “How does the poem being one sentence change how you read it?” **(20 minutes)**

Instruct students to write their own one-sentence poem about collective identity, using specific examples of shared culture and family experiences. **(15 minutes)**

Resources

- Video: [“Electric Slide”](#) Marcia Griffiths
- Essay: [“No Pause for Breath”](#) by Camille T. Dungy
- [Interview with CM Burroughs](#)
- [Recording](#) of Gwendolyn Brooks reading “We Real Cool”

5.

STORYTELLING POETICS: REMEMBERING AND (RE)IMAGINING

Authors: Shameka Cunningham, McKinley E. Melton, Adrienne Danyelle Oliver, Carmin Wong

Target Group: Older Adults, Elders

Goals

- Emphasize and explore themes: visual memory, imagination, interpretation, and storytelling
- Emphasize and explore form and elements of craft: epistolary form, poetic structure, and narrative (voice, perspective, sequencing)
- Participants will engage with personal history, draw connections between memory and imagination, and invite creative play as a tool for mental stimulation

Methodology:

- Interactive workshop
- Creative writing component
- Optional performance element

Day One: Focus on memory and material (gathering and generating)

Day Two: Focus on creative production (emphasis on epistolary forms)

Background Pedagogical Resources for Facilitator

- Dominique Christina – “Blood in My Eye: The Poetics of Trauma and Memory” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 315-316)
- Frank X Walker – “Memory, Research, Imagination, and the Mining of Historical Poetry” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 406-409)

Lesson Plan for Day One

Instructor plays lively, nostalgic music to set the mood.

Essential Questions

- How do we recover personal moments that were meaningful to us?
- How do our thoughts and emotions shape our memory of those moments?

Activities

Instructor uses a deck of playing cards to create partnerships among participants:

- Pairs are based on the number of each card (2, 3, Jack, Queen, etc.)
- Discussion topic is dictated by suit (Hearts, Spades, etc.)
 - Hearts – talk about your first/greatest love
 - Spades – talk about your first job
 - Clubs – talk about your most memorable fight or celebration
 - Diamonds – talk about the last gift you gave or received

Instructor asks reflection questions:

- What are some of the images that came to mind as you were telling your stories?
- What are some of the images that came to mind as you were listening to the stories of others?

Shift to a discussion of Jericho Brown's "The Card Tables" (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 33)

Open with excerpts from "[Furious Flower presents Jericho Brown](#)"

Instructor engages participants in a conversation about "imagery" that then transitions to "what is visual memory?"

Key Questions & Concepts

- *Imagery: Using descriptive language or sensory details to invoke a specific image*
- *Visual memory: Think about how memories come back to you in images*

Key questions to ask/concepts to pursue:

- The poem begins with a commanding two-word sentence: “Stop playing.” How does this sentence reveal the speaker’s tone and attitude?
- What images are represented in the opening lines?
- How is the speaker’s memory represented in this poem?
- How does the speaker rely on questions to inform the reader of their past? How do questions present distance between the speaker and their personal history?
- How does the past help us think about our present identity?
- There are sexual or erotic elements represented in the poem (lines 1-5). How does the poet’s language force us to dig deeper to uncover these moments and consider different meanings of a line?

Lesson Plan for Day Two: Two-Hour Workshop

Instructor plays lively, nostalgic music to set the mood.

Essential Questions

- How do we use language to illustrate the past?
- How do we shape the language or our memories into form—crafting the epistolary?

Activity

- Visualization exercise: Who would you want to share a story with or imagine who you would want to write a letter or tell a story to?
- Share examples of epistolaries.

Poetry Discussion

Share examples of epistolaries

- “The Root” by Derrick Weston Brown (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 87-89)
- “A Haiku Love Letter for Gabby Douglas” by Yalie Kamara (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 53)
- “Brown to Browne :: Douglass to Tubman Remix” by F. Douglas Brown (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 173-174)

Reflection Questions

- What striking images do you remember from the poem?
- How do those images reflect yesterday's definitions of imagery and visual memory?
- How do these poems reflect the elements of a letter?

—break—

Writing Time

Writing prompt: Using the work generated on Day One, begin crafting a letter to yourself or another person, place, or thing with which/whom you would like to have a dialogue. Include the images you recalled, modeling one of the following styles:

- “The Root” by Derrick Weston Brown (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 87-89)
- “A Haiku Love Letter for Gabby Douglas” by Yalie Kamara (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 53)
- “Brown to Browne : : Douglass to Tubman Remix” by F. Douglas Brown (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 173-174)

Sharing Stories/Feedback

PART III

LESSON PLANS AND CLASS EXERCISES

“Black poetry is one of the most important lenses to understand American culture and blackness in a Diasporic context.”

– DaMaris B. Hill



6.

PROMPTING QUESTIONS FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT - LESSON PLAN ACTIVITIES

Authors: Mary Beth Cancienne, Hayes Davis, Teri Ellen Cross Davis, Brian Hannon, T.J. Hendrix

Target Group: Middle School (7th-8th grade)

Originally from [Food for Bonding, Food for Resistance Unit Plan](#)

Whole class reading of “My Resistance is Black” by DéLana R.A. Dameron (from *Furious Flower* 2019, p. 187)

**Level
One**

What perspective is this poem being told from?
What are some of the things that are mentioned in the poem?
What words are repeated in the poem?

**Level
Two**

What greater historical event is this poem connected to? How do you know?
Why does Dameron repeat the phrase “some body?”
What affect does the separation of somebody into a phrase, “some body,” add to the meaning of the poem?
What other poetic devices does Dameron use?

**Level
Three**

In what ways is this poem about unsung heroes?
Can you relate to the speaker of this poem? How or why?
Have you ever worked behind the scenes on a project, performance, or event? Where you recognized for your efforts? Who was most celebrated?

Whole Group Activity – Connect Back to Holnes Poem (“Bread Pudding Grandmamma,” pp. 47-48)

Room Split Exercise Guiding Questions

- Which poem resonates strongly with you? *Students will silently choose a side and physically move to that side of the room.*
- Why? *Students will discuss why once they have gathered into their groups*

Mini-Discussion Questions

Level One	Who is the speaker in both poems? Do they have anything in common? How are the two poems structurally different? What are some commonalities in each of the poems?
Level Two	What are some common themes found in each poem? How do the authors use diction differently or similarly in their poems? Do the authors use the same literary devices in their poems?
Level Three	How do the ideas found in these poems represent greater ideas of concepts? In what way do each of the poems represent a process? How does the author present a greater idea through these processes?

7.

FOOD FOR BONDING & RESISTANCE - LESSON PLAN ACTIVITIES

Authors: Mary Beth Cancienne, Hayes Davis, Teri Ellen Cross Davis, Brian Hannon, T.J. Hendrix

Target Group: Middle School (7th-8th grade)

Originally from [Food for Bonding, Food for Resistance Unit Plan](#)

Poems: “My Resistance is Black” by DeLana R.A. Dameron (*Furious Flower*, 2019, p. 187), “Bread Pudding Grandmamma” by Darrel Alejandro Holnes (*Furious Flower*, 2019 pp. 47-48)

Instruct the students to take out the two poems we’ve read in the [previous two lessons](#). Display the following two questions on the board:

What do these two poems have in common?

What is different about these two poems?

Provide each student with two sticky notes and instruct them to write their responses on each sticky note separately. Have them post their completed responses to two different designated areas (this could be a t-chart drawn on the whiteboard or two larger post-it notes).

Review the students’ responses and discuss them as a whole group. Review the notes the two larger groups prepared the day before and discuss the structure and other poetic elements the students listed during the whole group exercise.

Ask students how they feel about writing a poem in either style. What style would they like to try? Tell them to turn and talk to their elbow partners to share their responses.

Explain to the group that they will now write a poem in the style of one of the two poems they read this week. They will have the rest of the class period to write. They can choose between the two poetic styles that were presented to them. Their poems must include:

- Imagery/sensory language
- Repetition
- Similar structural style to one of the poems

Drafting the Poem: During this step, the students will be in a writer’s workshop. They will have time to draft, edit, and revise. This step may overlap multiple days.

Closure/Formative Assessment: After students have finished writing their poems, they can voluntarily share them with the class. Ask the author or the audience (peers) to identify one example of poetic style or device used in the poem.

Options for Differentiation

- [Student Interviews](#)
- Peer Review and Peer Editing

8.

FOOD FOR RESISTANCE - LESSON PLAN ACTIVITIES

Authors: Mary Beth Cancienne, Hayes Davis, Teri Ellen Cross Davis, Brian Hannon, T.J. Hendrix

Target Group: Middle School (7th-8th grade)

Originally from [*“Food for Bonding, Food for Resistance” Unit Plan*](#)

Note: For your convenience, here is a [slides presentation](#) to guide you through this lesson. You are not required to use this document to teach the lesson.

Poems: “My Resistance is Black” by DéLana R.A. Dameron (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 187), “Bread Pudding Grandmamma” by Darrel Alejandro Holnes (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 47-48)

Present the following question to your learners: “How does your family cook rice?”

- Instruct them to take a few seconds to think about their response. Then, after cued, have them stand up and find a person on the opposite side of the room to share their response with. Encourage them to rotate after a minute (cue them) so they can hear from more than one of their peers. After 3-4 minutes, ask for volunteers to share the responses they heard. **(5 minutes)**

Instruct the learners to take out their journals/notebooks/a piece of paper. **(5 minutes)**

- Display the following writing prompt on the board:
 - Write about a person from your community or family who you feel needs more recognition for what they do for others.
- Provide any of the following additional supports for learners as needed:
 - Definition and examples of recognition
 - Time for brainstorming (1-5 minutes)
 - Sentence starters

Give learners five minutes to write and another five minutes for volunteers to share. Be sure to verbally acknowledge the information that they share, specifically any points that might relate to the poem they will read today. **(10 minutes)**

Wrap up the discussion with a lead-in to the poem, “My Resistance is Black” by DéLana R.A. Dameron, by first introducing the **author** and background, as well as **defining** resistance with the learners. *This could be done through asking questions and using their lived experiences to build the definition. Discourage Google searching! Try to come to the definition organically, then reinforce their understanding.* **(5 minutes)**

Present a mini-lesson on strategic use of repetition as a poetic structure. In the presentation, provide examples of repetition used in other Furious Flower poems. Lead the learners through a discussion of how the repetition adds to the meaning or depth of the poems. **(10 minutes)**

Share with learners that the poem they will read features strategic use of repetition as a device to enhance the poem’s meaning.

Whole class reading of “[My Resistance is Black](#)” by DéLana R.A. Dameron (15 minutes)

- **First:** You will read the poem out loud *with energy and feeling!*
- **Second:** You will instruct learners to read through the poem individually, focusing on structure (repetition, caesura, rhyme/meter, etc.).
- **Third:** Lead learners in discussing the similarities and differences between the poem they read the day before and this one. You may use [these leveled questions](#) to help guide the discussion.

Whole Group Activity – Connect Back to Holnes Poem (25 minutes)

- **Designate** a poem for each side of the classroom. Tell the learners that the left side of the classroom represents the Dameron poem and the right side of the classroom represents the Holnes poem. Then, instruct the learners to go to the side for the poetic style that resonated the most for them. Give them only one minute to settle on their sides. You may use [these leveled questions](#) to help guide the discussion.
- **Next**, have the learners discuss their choice and ask someone from each group to volunteer as the representative to share why they made their choice.
- **Conduct** a mini discussion about structure and style while the learners are still grouped. Provide one piece of chart paper to each group and have them list the poetic elements of their chosen style. Rotate between the two groups, listening and providing feedback only if needed. Probe learners for their rationales, and ask them how they would incorporate the elements in their own poems.

Closure/Formative Assessment: Give learners 2-3 minutes to write a short reflection about today’s lesson. You can provide them scrap paper or notecards, or you can give them time to write in their notebooks.

9.

STUDENT INTERVIEW EXERCISE

Authors: Mary Beth Cancienne, Hayes Davis, Teri Ellen Cross Davis, Brian Hannon, T.J. Hendrix

Target Group: Middle School (7th-8th grade)

Originally from [Food for Bonding, Food for Resistance Unit Plan](#)

A part of the Furious Flower Poetry Center culture is to preserve the writing process through documentation, which includes recorded video interviews. As an extension to these lessons, you could continue this tradition by having your students interview one another about their experiences with these workshops and/or writing their own poems.

Introduce the project to the students and explain that they will take part in a preservation project, during which they will write and answer interview questions about their experiences during the [“Food for Bonding”](#) and [“Food for Resistance”](#) workshops.

Ask students if they have ever participated in an interview. Ask them to share with you their experience and the process of conducting or participating in the interview. As the students begin to share, write on the board the components of the interview process based on the students’ responses. Encourage students to continue to share.

After your students stop sharing and your list is complete, **review** the list you created on the board and add any information the students will need to be reminded of before they begin working.

Then, **play** this [interview](#) with poet Toi Derricotte about the process of writing and revision (*Process of Writing* – 1:56 – 6:32).

- **Set an intention** for viewing by having the students look for answers to the questions as they watch:
 - What are some details the interviewee shares about their writing process?
 - What are some details the interviewee shares about their experience in the workshop?
 - What kinds of questions does the interviewer ask the interviewee? Are they closed or open-ended?
- Discuss the students’ responses to these questions after the video. Revise the components of the interview process based on the previous exercise.

Next, **allow** students to choose their partners. Have them swap poems and for 10 minutes have them read each other’s work independently, write questions, and comment about their peer’s piece. Encourage them to write at least three open-ended questions.

After the independent work time, have the students **turn and talk to their partners**. They can ask their questions and respond as practice before the interview. *Optional:* They can also talk about their experiences in the two workshops and share a minimum of two details about the poems. This is preparation time for the recordings they will do later.

Invite students to return to the whole group and share their concerns or questions before they begin their interviews. Address their questions and explain how you would like them to format their interviews. Provide time for them to outline their interviews before they begin to record

Send students to your pre-determined locations for interviews. Allow them 20 minutes to conduct both interviews.

Provide upload instructions to the students for their videos. *You will determine how and where your students will share their recordings.*

Possible Additional Extensions

- Editing video content
- Viewing party
- Poetry recital

10.

HISTORY AND POETRY - EDUCATIONAL SEMINAR

Authors: Shameka Cunningham, McKinley E. Melton, Adrienne Danyelle Oliver, Carmin Wong

Target Group: for Readers and Writers of All Ages

Setting

Community center (with computer lab) or library

- Could align with Black History Month programming
- Another option: community college non-credit, open to the public course

Learning Goals

- Invite participants to consider how you can learn about history through poetry and learn about the importance of historical context in shaping your understanding of poetry
- Develop/strengthen skills in information literacy (research skills and resource assessment)
- Develop/strengthen understanding of poetic allusion (in relation to memory, myth, and history)

Background Readings (for facilitator, or provided to participants if possible)

- Jon Woodson – “Consciousness, Myth, and Transcendence: Symbolic Action in Three Poems on the Slave Trade” (*The Furious Flowering* 1999, pp. 154-168)
- Eugenia Collier – “Message to the Generations: The Mythic Hero in Sterling Brown’s Poetry” (*Furious Flowering* 1999, pp. 25-37)

- Frank X Walker – “Memory, Research, Imagination, and the Mining of Historical Poetry” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 406-409)

Potential Videos

- [“The Fight & The Fiddle: Nikki Giovanni on ‘Using your history’”](#)
- [“The Fight & The Fiddle: Marilyn Nelson on Teaching American History Through Poetry”](#)
- [“The Fight & The Fiddle: Brenda Marie Osbey on History”](#)

Poems for the Workshop

- Rita Dove – “Claudette Colvin Goes to Work;” “Rosa;” and “The Enactment” (*Furious Flower* 2004, pp. 193-196)

Seminar Structure

Open with a five-minute brainstorm in response to the following writing prompts:

- Who are the heroes of the Civil Rights Movement?
- How did you come to learn about these heroes?

Shift into a discussion about the Civil Rights Movement as a widely discussed and, unfortunately, widely misunderstood moment in our history.

- What shapes historical understanding?
- Where do we mostly get our information?

Shift to discussion of poetry:

- Have we ever considered using poetry as a useful source to better understand this historical moment? And the people within this moment?
- What are the strengths of poetry in this regard? What are its limitations?
- How can we look at poetry alongside other resources to shape a fuller understanding?

Discussion:

- How many have heard of Rosa Parks? How many have heard of [Claudette Colvin](#)?
- Let's look at Rita Dove's "Claudette Colvin Goes to Work;" "Rosa;" and "The Enactment."
- Divide students into small groups; consider each poem individually
- Some potential questions:
 - What does Rita Dove accomplish by providing the focus on these women in this way?
 - How does Dove's poetry recreate an understanding of this "moment?"
 - What does the poetry "teach" us? What do we know now that we didn't know before? How does that knowledge shape our understanding of this historical event?
 - What allusions do we need to look up? *Lead into a discussion of which sources provide useful information, and how we evaluate sources.*
 - How do we look at "poetry" and "history" as different methods of relaying a narrative? How do these methods overlap? What does it mean to consider them together?

Following small group discussion, bring everyone together to talk about the three poems in conversation with one another:

- What is gained by considering these poems as a "trio," instead of individually?
- What picture comes into focus as a result?
- What other types of sources would be useful in framing these poems?

Exercise: guide students through the creation of a "Rosa Parks" reading list:

- Review types of sources to be included
- Consider how poetry coexists with other types of sources (secondary scholarship, primary journalism, etc.)
 - **For junior students:** provide a brief discussion about the "hows" and "whys" of their reading list
 - **For more advanced students or adult learners** (in more formal learning environments): create an annotated bibliography

11.

HISTORICAL INDEBTEDNESS OF CONTEMPORARY BLACK POETRY - HIGH SCHOOL LESSON PLAN

Authors: allia abduallah matta, Hayes Davis, Leona Sevick, Carmin Wong

Target Group: High School

Poems:

- “1994” by Lucille Clifton (*Furious Flower* 2004, p. 69-70)
- “Miz Lucille” by DaMaris B. Hill (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 45-46)

Historical Approach Exercise:

This exercise uses modes of intertextual analysis to draw connections between Black poetry. It centers on the idea of a historical figure (Lucille Clifton) and the ways in which the contemporary DaMaris B. Hill engages that figure. Students will read and contextualize both of the poems in steps. As an optional extension of this exercise, students will uncover information about Clifton, her poetic legacy, and the connection of her legacy to Hill and her work.

Objective:

To urge students toward an understanding of the historical indebtedness of contemporary Black poetry.

Classroom Preparation:

- Before class, the instructor prints out 3-4 copies of both poems in large font (at least 14-16 point).
- Instructor mounts both poems on poster-sized sticky note sheets and posts them on the walls around the classroom.

Lesson Plan:

- Instructor hands out copies of “Miz Lucille” by DaMaris B. Hill. Instructor reads the poem out loud to

the class, then asks for a student to read the poem.

- Instructor asks students:
 - What do you see in the poem?
 - What do you think about the poem?
 - What do you wonder about the poem?
 - Instructor gives students time to reflect in writing and records responses on the whiteboard.
- Following the see/think/wonder discussion, instructor asks students to do a “Gallery Walk” to read Dr. Hill’s poem next to one of Lucille Clifton’s poems and begin noticing commonalities between the two. Students have five minutes for the gallery.
- After the gallery walk, instructor leads students in a discussion using some or all of the questions below.

Questions:

- How does the speaker seem to feel about Lucille Clifton, or, what is the **tone** of the poem? What **language** in the poem helps to develop that **tone**?
- How does the poem itself pay homage to Lucille Clifton’s work and poetics? What is an “echo poem,” and how does Dr. Hill reflect Ms. Clifton’s work in her style?

Closing:

- Instructor asks students to close with a quiet writing exercise using the following prompt:
 - Is there an artist or author that **you** admire? How would you seek to pay tribute to them?

Optional Extension:

- During the next class period or for homework, instructor asks students to complete the following questions:
 - Do some research into the life of Lucille Clifton—what is to be admired about her life? What did she achieve, and what historical moments did she witness? What monuments to her life exist? What other poets have listed her as an influence or inspiration?
 - Who is Dr. DaMaris B. Hill? What has she achieved, and what historical moments has she witnessed?

Media:

- [Tribute to Lucille Clifton by Dr. Hill](#)
- [Lucille Clifton “What Poetry Is”](#)
- [Lucille Clifton Reads at the 92nd Street Y](#)

12.

SHEDDING THE SHAME, CLAIMING YOUR NAME - CLASS EXERCISES

Authors: Teri Ellen Cross Davis, Shauna M. Morgan, James Smethurst, L. Lamar Wilson

Target Group: High School/Undergraduate

Description: These exercises will ask students to consider the power and dynamics of naming. We invite them to participate in the “Shedding the Shame, Claiming a Name” activity before exploring poems that engage notions of naming—including the wounds caused by names, whether they are personal names or violent epithets.

Exercise One: Re-Portrait Your Name

Learning Objectives

Students will hone their analytical skills by engaging, interrogating, and examining poems to deepen their level of self awareness and comprehension. Using the poems as a foundation, students will research their own name and gather information to create their own poem (see Exercise Two), and expand their use of poetic devices as they make connections between self, poetry, and the world.

Poems

- F. Douglas. Brown, “Re-Portrait Your Name, Douglas.” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 30-32)
- Shauna M. Morgan, “Resume Names.” (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 300)

Instructions

Guide students through “Shedding the Shame, Claiming a Name”

- Ask students to call up language or name that wounds or has wounded them.
- Have students write that word on a piece of paper and take three minutes to reflect on what it feels like to see the word before them. Students may share if they feel comfortable doing so.
- Invite students to tear up the word, throw it away, and write down the name or word that they claim. Students can reflect and share that out loud.

Read poems, reflect on connections, and analyze poems using guiding questions.

- How do these poets reflect on the way one receives a name?
- How do these poets reflect on the way one chooses their name?
- How do names shape the way a person is perceived?
- What are the emotions conveyed in relationship to names?
- What are the thoughts attached to names?
- How do these poets convey thoughts as distinguished from emotions?
- How do these poets invite readers to think about the multiple meanings carried by names (historical, personal, individual, collective, cultural)?

Direct students to research their names (calling up oral histories and/or utilizing other research tools). This will be the content they use in Exercise Two.

Supplemental Activities

[Watch](#) Malcolm X Interview about names.

Listen to an album of your choice. (i.e. Earth, Wind, and Fire's [That's the Way of the World](#), Pharaoh Sanders, [Moon Child](#)) and explore connections with the poems.

View Glenn Ligon's ["Untitled \(I Feel Most Colored When Thrown Against a Sharp White Background\)"](#) and use it to discuss the African American tradition of rejecting unwanted names and claiming ones that affirm.

Exercise Two: Praise Poem (Claiming your name)

Learning Objectives

Students will hone their analytical skills by engaging, interrogating, and examining the poems to deepen their levels of self awareness and comprehension. Using the poems as a foundation, students will create one original

praise poem and expand their use of poetic devices as they draw from the “Shedding the Shame, Claiming a Name” exercise and their name research.

Poems

F. Douglas. Brown, “Re-Portrait Your Name, Douglas.” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 30-32)

JP Howard, “Praise Poem for My Leo Self.” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 49-50)

Instructions

Invite students to reflect on and share something from the experience of researching their names.

Read poems, reflect on connections, and analyze poems using guiding questions below.

- How does one learn to feel pride in their name?
- How does a name make one feel powerful?
- How do these poems explore the distinction between the definition and connotation of a name? In what ways do definitions and connotations overlap?
- What are the images, thoughts, emotions, and sensibilities conveyed in these poems? How do they reflect the relationship between naming and identity?
- Are there lines from these poems that resonate with you as you research your name and seek to better understand its origins, history, and meaning?

Draft your own name praise poem with the following guidelines:

- Explore and identify the language of your community.
- Incorporate both the historical meaning and the personal meaning of your name.
- Consider the names that you were given and the names that you have chosen for yourself.
- What would you want someone to imagine or understand when they first hear your name?
- What would you want someone to remember most about your name?

Supplemental Activities

[Watch](#) Elizabeth Alexander read “Praise Song for the Day” and read Hafizah Augustus Geter’s [“Praise Song.”](#)

Listen to [“New Name” by Jah 9](#) and explore connections with the poems.

View Elizabeth Catlett’s [“In Sojourner Truth I Fought for the Rights of Women”](#) and discuss the African American tradition of rejecting unwanted names and claiming ones that affirm.

Study the African origins of [the praise song](#)

[Research](#) your name. [Here's](#) another source to research names.

13.

WRITING THE BODY: MIND/BRAIN PERSONA POEM - WRITING EXERCISE

Authors: Anastacia-Reneé, Teri Ellen Cross Davis, Shauna M. Morgan

Target Group: High School, Undergraduate

Poem:

Nandi Comer, “Why I Don’t Call On Cops” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 289-290)

Description:

This generative writing exercise asks students/writers to read Nandi Comer’s poem “Why I Don’t Call on Cops” then write a poem personifying a body part. The poem can be in direct conversation with Comer’s poem and/or focus on the brain/mind, or the poem can focus on the various networks or bodily functions the brain controls, i.e. heartbeat, breathing, blood pressure.

Learning Objectives:

Students will hone their analytical skills by engaging, interrogating, and examining Nandi Comer’s poem “Why I Don’t Call on Cops” to deepen their level of observation and comprehension. Using the poem as a foundation and inspiration, students will create one original poem and expand their use of poetic devices, specifically focusing on personification of the body.

Instructions:

- Read “Why I Don’t Call on Cops” and note your first impressions of the poem.
- Identify all the places where the mind/brain appear or are referenced.
- Draft your own poem considering the following questions:
 - What would the brain say?
 - What does the brain seek?
 - When does it rest and when is it most active?
 - How would the brain perceive itself?

Supplemental Activities:

- Listen to [“My Mind Playing Tricks on Me”](#) by Geto Boys and explore connections with the poem.

- Have students spend three minutes exploring and thinking about their brain/mind.
- [Review](#) the anatomy of the brain.
- [Read](#) in more detail about the brain and how it works.
- [Review](#) what a persona poem is and read this [essay](#) on persona poems by Rebecca Hazelton.

14.

WRITING THE BODY: HANDS - WRITING EXERCISE

Authors: Anastacia-Reneé, Teri Ellen Cross Davis, Shauna M. Morgan

Target Group: High School, Undergraduate

Poem:

Safiya Sinclair, “Hands” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 305-306)

Description:

This generative writing exercise asks students/writers to read and analyze Safiya Sinclair’s poem “Hands” and then compose their own poem featuring hands and an engagement with the five senses and landscape. Landscape is defined as the writer’s environment, be it urban, suburban, or rural. Other prompts or areas to explore in the poem can include physiology, anatomy, the palm, the fingers and thumb, fingernails, etc.

Learning Objectives:

Students will hone their analytical skills by engaging, interrogating, and examining Safiya Sinclair’s “Hands” to deepen their level of observation and comprehension. Using the poem as a foundation and inspiration, students will create one original poem and expand their use of poetic devices.

Instructions:

- Read Safiya Sinclair’s “Hands” and note your first impressions of the poem.
- Identify all the places where hands appear or are referenced.
- Draft your own “hands” poem considering the following questions:
 - Who do these hands belong to?
 - What do the hands feel, see, taste, hear, smell?

- What do these hands say and/or experience?
- Where do the hands go? Where do we see them in the landscape of the poem?

Supplemental Activities:

- Listen to Bill Withers’ “[Grandma’s Hands](#)” and explore connections with the poem.
- Have students spend three minutes looking at and tracing their own hands.
- [Review](#) the anatomy of the hand.
- View Jacob Lawrence’s [The Shoemaker](#) and incorporate a lesson on [ekphrasis](#).

15.

A CREATIVE RESPONSE - CLASS EXERCISE

Authors: Mary Beth Cancienne, Shameka Cunningham, T.J. Hendrix, Leona Seveck

Target Group: Undergraduate

A creative response to the poem “Poetics as Response to Certain Tropes as Allergens” by Douglas Kearney (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 352-354).

Exercise One:

Present a panel of “Poetics as Response to Certain Tropes as Allergens” by Douglas Kearney to the students and have them examine it quietly.

- The facilitator should specifically use the word “piece” rather than poem.
- Students should write notes about their findings and curiosities as they review it.

Invite students to share their findings for 5-10 minutes.

The facilitator will then ask “Who thinks this piece is a poem?” Have the students share why or why it’s not a poem.

The facilitator shares an excerpt of Kearney talking about his process:

Douglas Kearney – [Navigating the Briar Patch: Poetry As a Collision of Texts](#) at timestamp **10:14**

The facilitator will show the students the rest of the poem.

The students will be instructed to take one of the panels and write a portion of it in a more recognizable form.

The facilitator will review styles and forms with students before they begin to write (sonnet, haibun, couplets, quatrains, tercets, stanzas, rondel, etc).

Exercise Two:

Students will watch a short [Ted-Ed video](#) from Melissa Kovacs: “What makes a poem...a poem?”

The students will view and listen to the poem [Afrofuturism \(Blanche says, “Meh”\)](#) by Douglas Kearney.

The facilitator will lead the students in a discussion of this poem and the first by Kearney. Students will be encouraged to focus on craft elements such as repetition, caesura, and structure as well as how the audio recording connects to the visual effect of the poem as written.

The facilitator will introduce the exercise of turning a poem written in a recognizable form into a visual or non-standard poem (this could include audio, performance, etc). The students will be instructed to write a visual poem/non-standard poem; however, it will not be an original piece. They will take one of the five or ten poems we’ve read in the *Furious Flower: Seeding the Future of African American Poetry* anthology and write it in the visual poem style.

Students will be given time to review the poems and discuss them with partners, if they choose.

Once assignments are completed, share and discuss how this changes the experience of the poem.

16.

INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITY AND POETIC DEVICES - CLASSROOM EXERCISE

Authors: Mary Beth Cancienne, Brian Hannon, DaMaris B. Hill, Jim Smethurst

Target Group: Undergraduate

Objective: To analyze and write poems that demonstrate knowledge of poetic devices and theoretical perspectives of intersectional identity.

Goal: To demonstrate awareness of theories associated with intersectionality in poems from *Furious Flower: Seeding the Future of African American Poetry*.

Classroom Exercise One

- Create a PowerPoint that is an assortment of images that represent you. Use objects, artifacts, music, photographs, and items of significance to describe yourself. You may also use words.
- Introduce intersectionality as a term and define it (some useful readings linked below)”
 - [“Kimberle Crenshaw Explains Intersectionality Today”](#)
 - [“Washington University in St. Louis – ‘Intersectionality Self-Study Guide’”](#)
- Read Tara Betts’ “Another Clearing of the Land: Epitaph for Hadiyah Pendleton” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 85-86).
- Have students work in groups (4-5) to create a presentation about the intersectional identities of the poem’s subject. Students can then share their presentations and discuss how their presentations reiterate the intersectionality of the subject of the poem.

Classroom Exercise Two

- Read Derrick Weston Brown’s “Melinated Merman aka Aquabruh Wants to Holler at You” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 167-168).
- In pairs, discuss the title of the poem.

- Discuss the intersectionality of the speaker, the “Melinated Merman.”
- Write a poem about sliding into someone’s DMs while trying to approach a love interest. Make sure your students integrate the speaker’s intersectionality while writing their “love letters.”
- When your students are done, have a few of them share their pieces aloud. Then ask your students to briefly discuss how their pieces reflect the intersectionality of the “Melinated Merman.”

17.

HISTORICAL INDEBTEDNESS OF CONTEMPORARY BLACK POETRY - UNDERGRADUATE LESSON PLAN

Authors: allia abduallah matta, Mary Beth Cancienne, Hayes Davis, Leona Sevick, Carmin Wong

Target Group: Undergraduate

Poems:

- “1994” by Lucille Clifton (*Furious Flower* 2004, pp. 69-70)
- “Miz Lucille” by DaMaris B. Hill (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 45-46)

Historical Approach Exercise:

This exercise uses modes of intertextual analysis to draw connections within Black poetry. It centers on the idea of a historical figure (Poet Lucille Clifton) and the ways in which contemporary poet DaMaris B. Hill engages that figure and her work. Students will read and contextualize both of the poems in steps and uncover information about Clifton, her poetic legacy, and the connection of her legacy to Hill and her work.

Objective:

To urge students toward an understanding of the historical indebtedness of contemporary Black poetry.

Classroom Preparation:

- Instructors can project both poems on the screen in front of the class.
- After reading the poems out loud, students should engage with the two poems by pointing out similar structural elements, stylistic choices, and figurative language.

Lesson Plan:

- Instructor hands out copies of “Miz Lucille” by DaMaris B. Hill. Instructor reads the poem out loud to the class, then asks for a student to read the poem.

- What images are evoked in the opening lines of the poem? How does the speaker's choice of language create proximity between the speaker and Clifton?
- Instructor asks students to do a "gallery walk" to read Dr. Hill's poem next to one of Lucille Clifton's poems and begin noticing commonalities between the two.
 - [Edutopia explanation of "gallery walk"](#)
 - [Facing History explanation of "gallery walk"](#)
- Following the gallery walk, students are asked to gather in small groups.
 - What ideas are being "echoed" in Dr. Hill's poem?
 - How do the poet's technical choices contribute to the theme of "Miz Lucille?"
- After the "gallery walk," the instructor leads students in a discussion using some or all of the questions below.

Note: Practitioners can use the key questions to facilitate student engagement with the poems in terms of whole group class discussion, guided free-writing, small group analysis and discussion of the texts, and discussion questions to build a writing assignment or essay.

- How does the speaker seem to feel about Lucille Clifton, or, what is the **tone** of the poem? What **language** in the poem helps to develop that **tone**?
- Research the life of Lucille Clifton—what is to be admired about her life? What did she achieve, and what historical moments did she witness? How are she and her legacy honored and recognized? What other poets have listed her as an influence or inspiration?
- Who is Dr. DaMaris B. Hill? What has she achieved? What significant events have occurred during her lifetime?
- How does the poem itself pay homage to Lucille Clifton's work and poetics? What is an "[echo poem](#)," and how does Dr. Hill reflect Ms. Clifton's work in her style?
- How does Dr. Hill's poem engage with and/or honor Clifton's poetry and literary legacy? Why is this important in the tradition of Black poetry? How might your writing engage this tradition?
- Free-write session. Students should begin to write down their thoughts and ideas about the poems. How does Dr. Hill's poem engage with and/or honors Clifton's poetry and literary legacy?

Media:

- [Tribute to Lucille Clifton by Dr. Hill](#)
- [Lucille Clifton "What Poetry Is"](#)
- [Lucille Clifton Reads at the 92nd Street Y](#)

18.

WRITING THE 'I,' IDENTITY, AND LEGACY - LESSON PLAN

Authors: Anastacia-Reneé, Ariana Benson, Mary Beth Cancienne, Leona Sevic, James Smethurst

Target Group: Undergraduate

Framing Questions – “I, Identity, Legacy”

- What has been the contribution of the Furious Flower Poetry Center?
 - History, liberation, etc.
- How can we invite students to consider poetry as a way to explore themselves and their lives? *Note: a way to hook undergraduates: writing the “I,” identity, and legacy.*
 - Identify and list the poems that are about writing the “I.”
 - Where are we now, and where have we come from?
 - What is your creation story in these poems?

Generative Writing Prompt

Consider this prompt as an effective way to discuss issues of identity and to invite students to think about the multiple layers of meaning behind particular metaphors.

What would you be in a garden? How does this relate to your family history?

Poems

From *Furious Flower: Seeding the Future of African American Poetry*

- “self-portrait with no flag” by Safia Elhillo (pp. 36-37)
 - *I poem*

- “Fish Fry” by Remica Bingham-Risher (p. 28)
 - *no over reliance on “I”–still writing about the self. A lesson in form*
- “For the Dead Homie” by Danez Smith (pp. 130-132)
 - *in comparison to “Fish Fry”–identity*
- “My Resistance is Black” by DéLana R.A. Dameron (p. 187)
 - *also talk about form–what is this? Is this a poem? What do you make of the big spaces in the poem? It’s an “I” and “you” poem*
- “Sure, You Can Ask Me about Hip-Hop” by Alan W. King (pp. 244-245)
 - *Learning how to teach an I poem. Teach with Diane Burns poem?*
- “The Root” by Derrick Weston Brown (pp. 87-89)
 - *legacy and form–haibun*
- “Let My Anger Be the Celebration We Were Never Supposed to Have” by Natasha Oladokun (p. 118)
 - *legacy; do with recordings of Hughes, Brooks, Baraka...*
- “I Can’t Go For That (No Can Do)” by avery r. young (p. 143)
 - *writes about I, identity, and legacy–all three! Can also talk about form*

Reading Exercise

Identify and consider the pronouns in “self-portrait” and “Fish Fry.”

- How are the pronouns used differently?
- Is there any change in the way pronouns are used throughout the poem?
- What is the writer trying to accomplish?
- Notice the active “I” vs. observing “I.” What significance does this distinction hold?

Writing Prompts

- Consider the major “rites of passage” in one’s life. How are these rites of passage individual and communal? Can you produce eight lines that speak to rites of passage?
- What is your soundtrack for the week?
 - *pick a form–14 lines?*
- What is your season today?
 - *give a form–haibun?*
- Explain the form of haibun:
 - [“More than the Birds, Bees, and Trees: A Closer Look at Writing Haibun”](#)
 - [Poem Analysis: Haibun](#)

Revision Exercises

- Rewrite one of your poems after rereading the poems we looked at in class.
- Flip the order of the lines to see how it feels.

Part One

Writing the “I”: Exploring Personhood (the internal, life experiences, family histories, etc.) and What Makes You Uniquely You

- Read these two poems:
 - “self-portrait with no flag” by Safia Elhillo (p. 36)
 - *I poem*
 - “Fish Fry” by Remica Bingham-Risher (p. 28)
- Discuss: How do the poets resist overreliance on the “I” while still writing about the self? Consider the variations/similarities in form.
- Complete the following reading exercise: Look for the pronouns in “self-portrait” and “Fish Fry.”
- Consider and discuss the following questions:
 - How are pronouns used differently?
 - Is there any change throughout the poem (from one stanza to the next, from the beginning of the poem to the end)?
 - What is the writer trying to accomplish?
 - When does the poet use the active “I” vs. the observing “I?” What do you notice?

Part Two

Writing the “Identity”: Exploring Belonging to Groups (racial, ethnic, gendered, generational, etc.) and Cultures

- Read these two poems:
 - “For the Dead Homie” by Danez Smith (pp. 130-132)
 - *in comparison to “Fish Fry”—identity*
 - “My Resistance is Black” by DéLana R. A. Dameron (p. 187)

- Discuss: Form—what is this? Is this a poem? What do you make of the big spaces in the poem? It's an "I" and "you" poem.
- Complete **one** of the three following free-write prompts:
 - Write about a personal rite of passage. What sights do you see, what do you smell, hear, taste, *feel*? Why is it important to you? Who were you before the rite of passage, and how did you change after?
 - What is your soundtrack for the week? In 14 lines, list the sounds you've heard, the music that is the background of your life, the voices that have spoken to you or that reverberate in your head.
 - How would you describe the season (fall, summer, spring, winter) that you're in today? What does this reveal about how you're feeling, what you've been thinking about, what your world looks like, what you want it to be like?

Part Three

Writing the "Legacy": Exploring Poetic and Personal Lineages, Global Histories and Events, and Ancestors (i.e. which stories have made yours possible?)

- Read these two poems:
 - "Sure, You Can Ask Me about Hip-Hop" by Alan W. King (pp. 244-245)
 - "The Root" by Derrick Weston Brown (pp. 87-89)
- Discuss: How do these poets understand themselves as part of a lineage? What are they inheriting? What do they hope to leave behind? What influences from the past inform their writing and their work?
 - *Learning how to teach an I poem. Teach with Diane Burns poem? legacy and form—haibun*
- Writing exercise: Have students turn what they've written from the above prompts into a haibun.

Conclusion

How can all the kinds of written "I" work together in one poem?

- Read these two poems:
 - "Let My Anger Be the Celebration We Were Never Supposed to Have" by Natasha Oladokun (p. 118)

- *legacy; do with recordings of Hughes, Brooks, Baraka...*
- “I Can’t Go For That (No Can Do)” by avery r. young (p. 143)
 - *writes about I, identity, and legacy—all three! Can also talk about form.*
- Revision exercise: Have students “flip” their haibun—rewrite the poem beginning with the last sentence, then the second-to-last sentence, and so on, until the entire poem is flipped
 - *try it with the haiku as well!*

Visuals:

- [Amiri Baraka and Askia Touré Furious Flower](#)
- [Gwendolyn Brooks at JMU](#)

19.

THE POEM BREAKDOWN - CLOSE READING ACTIVITY

Authors: allia abduallah-matta, Angel C. Dye, Shauna Morgan, Dave Wooley

Target Audience: Advanced Undergraduate

Poets Sonia Sanchez and Tony Medina discuss the power and the significance of poetry as they situate the existence of a text like *Bum Rush the Page*. Sanchez references the importance of “a politics” of being/of being Black/being history/unearthing history. Medina asserts, “any poet worth his or her weight in syllables and words uses poetry for certain reasons, be it to define one’s self, to defend one’s self or to describe one’s environment with accuracy, communicating a clear understanding of what is going on in the world” (xx). Medina further says of poetry, “there is a music that takes place, filled with metaphors and memories, madness and messages” (xxi).

– Medina, Tony, and Louis R. Rivera, editors. *Bum Rush the Page: A Def Poetry Jam*. Crown, 2001.

Break it Down

This exercise can be applied to any of the poems in the Furious Flower anthologies (1999, 2004, 2019).

- Read the poem aloud.
- Where do you enter (connect to and/or understand) the poem?
- Annotate and locate key words in the poem.
- Use your [poem notes](#) or annotations to:
 - Break apart the poem (stanzas/lines) and list key words/concepts in/about the poem;
 - Associate the words to identify significant ideas/themes/symbolism/imagery that serve as entry points to explicate the poem:
 - a) Theme assessment based on key words/concepts—what is the story of the poem?
 - b) Who/what is the poem about (character, place, community, culture, politics...)
- Construct an analytical statement that builds on what you have done in a) and b).
- How does your statement tell us something about the poem?

Note: This is a useful exercise to get you to think about **how to read poems, connect themes, and construct analytical statements that could then direct an analytical discussion**. You can even use this as a process for constructing your poem notes.

Other breakdown entry points:

- Consider and discuss **the context(s)** (cultural, historical, political, social etc.) of the text.
- Consider and discuss **the subtext** (the larger implications of the text—what else the piece could mean, perhaps represents or symbolizes).
- Must be supported by your interpretation(s) of the text.

Discussion Questions

- How do [Black] poets make poems, and what is that they strive to say and ultimately do?
- How does [Black] poetry reflect the cultural, historical, and societal contexts in which it was written and also reflect “a sign of the times?”
- How does the verse represent the story/message of the poem?
- Locate the specific cultural, historical, defining moment events that spawn:
 - literary and artistic movements
 - public attitude, outcry, and defiance
 - how the poets respond (what they do/say in their work)
- How does an understanding of these catalysts help you to better understand:
 - form;
 - aesthetic;
 - message; and
 - how to approach analyzing the work?

Note: These questions and notes can help you to create more thorough poem notes and discussion responses/critical essays.

20.

SEEKING A LANGUAGE OLDER THAN WORDS: LIBERATION & THE BLACK POETIC TRADITION - SEMINAR LESSON PLAN

Authors: allia abduallah-matta, Angel C. Dye, Shauna M. Morgan, Dave Wooley

Target Group: Advanced Undergraduate

Learning Objectives

- Students will explore the body as a political space in Black literary traditions.
- Students will hone the skills of close reading to interpret poetry.
- Students will make connections between self and the world as they examine the body as a political space.

Poems

- “Blood in My Eye: The Poetics of Trauma and Memory” by Dominique Christina (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 315-316)
- “90 poems I didn’t write for you” by Alexis Pauline Gumbs (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 38-41)
- “I Wish You Black Sons” by Glenis Redmond (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 122-124)

Note: Practitioners can use the following discussion questions and activities to frame in-class instruction, move through the unit, and to construct (low/high stakes) assignments, such as reading responses and literary essays.

Key Questions

- How do poets draw on and explore their connection to Black historical/community space(s) and/or expressive culture(s)?

- Do the poets tell a story about place(s)/space(s) that are situated within or amid class, socio-economic, or political crossroads?
- Analyze the ways in which bodies as subjects/objects are positioned in society in relation to power as addressed in the poems.
- Explore what it means to be a part of and/or outside of the U.S. American mainstream culture as expressed in the essays, hip-hop music, and culture.

Activities

Activity One – Free write: Respond to Dominique Christina’s essay “Blood in My Eye: The Poetics of Trauma and Memory.” You might consider the author’s opening words about “rage” or what it means to seek “language older than words.” How does one find language that precedes what we know or understand as words? Why might they need to? How do you understand Dominique Christina’s discussion of “power?” Do you agree with her that writing is a “political” and “confessional” act? **(10 minutes)**

Activity Two – Read, annotate, share: Students will individually read Alexis Pauline Gumbs’ “90 poems I didn’t write for you” and annotate the text including identifying three “notable moments”—an AHA! moment, a HUH? moment, and a WTF! moment. They will discuss in small groups and share those moments with the larger class community in a whole group discussion.

Note: Instructors can help students identify and define poetic devices.

Activity Three – Create poem notes: Students refer to the Gumbs poem and their annotations to create poem notes that reflect favorite lines, thoughts, images, keywords, and themes from the poem.

Note: Poem notes can be in any format on the page (bullet points, paragraphs, etc.). Poem notes allow the students to reflect on where they enter the poem. Discuss emotion(s), theme(s), recognizable points of understanding—what is happening in the poem/representation—and address symbolism, metaphor, imagery, and/or meaning. Students should point to what they notice about the text that could be further contextualized and/or explicated, during class discussion and/or for writing assignments.

Activity Four – View [Jasmine Richards’ “Why I Fight For Black Lives.”](#) Students will view the video, reflect, then turn and talk with a partner. They should create community notes to share out to the whole group. Some questions they might consider include: What stood out? What connections might you make to the poem and essay?

Activity Five – Group reading of Glenis Redmond’s “I Wish You Black Sons.” Students will perform a shared read-aloud of the poem. Each student should read one “I wish” statement and then pass the reading to the next student. This should be followed by viewing [the video of Glenis Redmond’s reading](#).

Activity Six – Read, annotate, share: Students will individually read Glenis Redmond’s “I Wish You Black Sons” and annotate the text, including identifying three “notable moments”—an AHA! moment, a

HUH? moment, and a WTF! moment. They will discuss in small groups and share those moments with the larger class community in a whole group discussion.

Activity #7 – Create poem notes: Students refer to the Redmond poem and their annotations to create poem notes that reflect favorite lines, thoughts, images, keywords, and themes from the poem.

Activity #8 – Draft and read a poem that models Gumbs’ or Redmond’s poem. Consider their list forms and repeated beginning lines. You might “wish” someone or something a day in your shoes. You might wish them a challenge that you have faced. Perhaps you have a playlist of songs that you did not share with them or a bunch of memes you didn’t let them laugh at with you. Think about how Gumbs and Redmond use repetition to create and expand meaning around (un)freedom and the body. Remember that your poem does not have to be perfect or in its final form. Record the lines that beckon you.

Media

- [Why I Fight For Black Lives](#)
- [Glenis Redmond reads “I Wish You Black Sons”](#)

21.

THE BOP: CREATIVE WRITING EXERCISE

Authors: Anastacia-Reneé, Mary Beth Cancienne, DaMaris B. Hill, McKinley E. Melton

Target Group: All Ages

Warm up – create a playlist for the week

- Tell me more: What’s your modality (Pandora, Spotify, Vinyl, Mix Tape, YouTube, etc.)?
- What is informing your playlist? (emotion, memory, current events)
- Invite students to pair/share some of the standouts from their playlist; are there overlaps? Songs that are in conversation with one another?

Follow-up

- Choose one of your favorite songs from the playlist (one that you know the lyrics to), and add an additional two lines of lyrics.

Explain the “Bop” form

- [Poets.org – Explanation of “Bop”](#)
 - “the Bop is a form of poetic argument consisting of three stanzas, each stanza followed by a repeated line, or refrain, and each undertaking a different purpose in the overall argument of the poem”
- Situate within a broader discussion of music and Black poetry
- Break down key elements of the form
- Help students navigate the essays and poems in the Furious Flower resource, [“Language, Music, and the Vernacular in African American Poetry”](#)

Assignment

- Direct students to write a bop using the lyrics from music on *their* playlist.

Group Closing Discussion

- What did you learn from this exercise?
- What challenged you? What excited you?
- What can you take from this exercise and direct toward other creative efforts?

Supplemental Readings

- Dawn Lundy Martin and Adam Fitzgerald – [“On the Black Avant-garde, Trigger Warnings, and Life in East Hampton”](#)
- Evie Shockley – “Race, Experiments, and the Black Avant-Garde” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 69-82)
- Meta DuEwa Jones – “The String of Grace: Renovating New Rhythms in the Present-Future of Black Poetry and Music” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 213-230)

22.

SINGLE POET WORKSHOP: CONTEXT AND CONVERSATION - WORKSHOP LESSON PLAN

Authors: Shameka Cunningham, McKinley E. Melton, Adrienne Danyelle Oliver, Carmin Wong

Target Group: All Ages

This is a generalized version of [“Glenis Redmond: Context and Conversation – Workshop Lesson Plan”](#)

Workshop Objectives

- Gain/strengthen language for talking about poetry
- Introduce a particular poet (with an emphasis on context and community)
- Empower students to envision themselves as part of the creative community

Community Workshop – Structure

Part One: Engaging with the poet’s life through the poet’s work

- **Presentation:** Provide participants with key biographical information, including historical context, key events/experiences, and relationships in their life.
- **Discussion questions:** What do we know about the poet’s life & experience? How does it impact their work, including and beyond poetry?
- **Resources:** Provide participants with video of the poet delivering a reading, giving a lecture, or engaging in an interview.

Part Two: Engaging with a specific poem, with an emphasis

on form and craft

- Lead workshop participants through a “deep dive” into a single poem.
 - Highlight technical elements of the poem.
 - Review language for literary devices and strategic craft decisions, with a consideration of impact and how particular craft choices shape the experience of the poem.
- **Creative exercise:** Invite participants to model/replicate particular techniques in their own work.

Part Three: Engaging with a specific poem, with an emphasis on theme and content

- Meditate and reflect upon the resonant themes that shape the experience of this poem.
- **Creative exercise:** What’s going on in your life that would show up on the page?

Part Four: How do we think about this poem/poet in conversation with other poems/poets?

- Lead participants through a discussion of how this poem works alongside others (with respect to form and content).
- Provide participants with a “Further Reading List” that they can take with them, following the workshop.
- **Creative exercise:** Remind/Reinforce their understanding of how they are in conversation with this poem, based on the work that they have produced or might/will produce.

23.

GLENIS REDMOND: CONTEXT AND CONVERSATION - WORKSHOP LESSON PLAN

Authors: Shameka Cunningham, McKinley E. Melton, Adrienne Danyelle Oliver, Carmin Wong

Target Group: Adult Learners

For a more generalized version, see [*“Single Poet Workshop: Context and Conversation – Workshop Lesson Plan”*](#)

Workshop Objectives

- Gain/strengthen language for talking about poetry.
- Introduce a particular poet (with an emphasis on context and community).
- Empower students to envision themselves as part of the creative community.

Community Workshop – Structure

Part I: Engaging with the poet's life through the poet's work

Presentation:

Glenis Redmond is the First Poet Laureate of Greenville, South Carolina. She is a Kennedy Center Teaching Artist, and a Cave Canem alumni. She has authored six books of poetry: *Backbone* (Underground Epics, 2000), *Under the Sun* (Main Street Rag, 2002), and *What My Hand Say* (Press 53, 2016), *Listening Skin* (Four Way Books), *Three Harriets & Others* (Finishing Line Press), and *Praise Songs for Dave the Potter*, Art by Jonathan Green, and Poetry by Glenis Redmond (University of Georgia Press). Glenis received the highest arts award in South Carolina, the Governor's Award and inducted into the South Carolina Academy of Authors. She is a "Charlie Award" recipient awarded by the Carolina Mountains Literary Festival and was recently a recipient of the Peacemaker Award by the Upstate Mediation Center in 2022. Glenis was born on Shaw AFB in Sumter,

South Carolina. She presently resides in Greenville. She was the founder of the Greenville Poetry Slam in the early 90's.

from [Glenis Redmond's website](#)

Discussion Questions:

- What do we know about the poet's life & experience?
- How does it impact their work?
- What is their work (including and beyond poetry)?

Resources:

Provide participants with video of the poet delivering a reading, giving a lecture, or engaging in an interview

- [Glenis Redmond Interview](#)
- [Glenis Redmond – “I Wish You Black Sons” \(An Original Poem\)](#)

Part II: Engaging with a specific poem, with an emphasis on form and craft

- Lead workshop participants through a “deep dive” into a single poem.
- Highlight technical elements of the poem.
- Review language for literary devices and strategic craft decisions, with a consideration of impact and how particular craft choices shape the experience of the poem.
- Creative exercise: invite students to model particular techniques and replicate in their own work

Part III: Engaging with a specific poem, with an emphasis on theme and content

[“I Wish You Black Sons”](#) by Glenis Redmond (also in *Furious Flower*, 2019)

- Meditate and reflect upon the resonant themes that shape the experience of this poem
- Creative exercise: What's going on in your life that would show up on the page?

Part IV: How do we think about this poem/poet in conversation with other poems/poets?

- Lead participants through a discussion of how this poem works alongside others (with respect to form and content).
- Other poems to consider:
 - Reginald Dwayne Betts – “When I Think of Tamir Rice While Driving” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 157-159)
- Provide Students with a “Further Reading List” that they can take with them, following the workshop.
- Creative exercise: remind/reinforce their understanding of how they are in conversation with this poem, based on the work that they have produced or might/will produce

Further Reading:

- [Glenis Redmond’s Website](#)
- Glenis Redmond Poetry Collections:
 - *Backbone* (Underground Epics Publishing, 2000)
 - *What My Hand Say* (Press 53, 2016)
 - *Under the Sun* (Main Street Rag, 2008)
 - *The Three Harriets and Others* (Finishing Line Press, 2022)
 - *The Listening Skin* (Four Way Books, 2022)
- Sarasohn, Lisa. “Glenis Redmond: Poet, Teaching Artist, Griot.” *North Carolina Literary Review* (2019), pp. 44-57.

24.

FRESH IDEAS FOR THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS - LESSON PLAN

Authors: Tyree Daye, Meta DuEwa Jones, DaMaris B. Hill, Dana A. Williams, L. Lamar Wilson

Target Group: Graduate Seminar

Primary Texts: Poems for Focused Study

- Nicole Sealey’s [“Centó for the Night I Said, ‘I Love You’”](#)
- [“Wholly One: Still \(a centó for Furious Flower\)”](#)
- Amaud Jamaul Johnson’s [“Hayden,”](#) (from Red Summer, 2016; here’s a review of [the collection](#))

Learning Objectives

- To build community among a new cohort of students.
- To incite excitement about reading Black poetry and engaging in the practice of writing.
- To engender students’ understanding of their voices alongside the voices of others.

Learning Goals

- To consider how the act of writing poetry is solitary but also community-oriented.
- To underscore the importance of reading others’ poetry in the writing of original poems.
- To model the process that poets follow in finding their voices by navigating other voices.

Assignments/Exercise

The first day will begin with a collective creative writing assignment. The class will collaborate to create a centó

using one line from one poem of the student's choice in *Furious Flower: Seeding the Future of African American Poetry* (2019).

Step One: Students will watch [the interview with Dr. Gabbin and Lauren K. Alleyne](#) to get an understanding of the Furious Flower organization. Then, they will read Rita Dove's "Foreword" (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. xvii-xx).

Step Two: Introduce the form of the cento from [poets.org](#)

- From the Latin word for "patchwork," the cento (or collage poem) is a poetic form composed entirely of lines from poems by other poets.
- Early examples can be found in the work of [Homer](#) and [Virgil](#).
- Contemporary centos are often witty, creating irony or humor from the juxtaposition of images and ideas. Two examples of contemporary centos are "[The Dong with a Luminous Nose](#)" (annotated) by [John Ashbery](#) and Peter Gizzi's "[Ode: Salute to the New York School, 1950-1970](#)" (Mississippi Review 31:3, pp. 111-127). Ashbery's cento takes its title from the poem of the same name by Edward Lear and weaves together an unlikely array of voices, including [Gerard Manley Hopkins](#), [T. S. Eliot](#), and [Lord Byron](#). Gizzi used the form to create a collage of voices and bibliography of the [New York School poets](#).
- How do contemporary Black poets engage with this tradition? Read Nicole Sealey's "[Cento for the Night I Said, 'I Love You'](#)" and Amaud Jamaul Johnson's "[Hayden](#)," a tribute to Robert Hayden, the first Black poetry consultant at the Library of Congress (now the U.S. poet laureate). Read more of Hayden's work [at the Poetry Foundation](#). [Here's a review of Johnson's Red Summer \(Tupelo, 2016\)](#), where "Hayden" appears, which offers context for the poem's engagement with Hayden's tradition of honoring luminaries who survived chattel slavery and post-Reconstruction Jim Crow violence.
 - Check out Sealey's "Candelabra with Heads" (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 128-129) and Johnson's "Featuring Lonette McKee as Sister" (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 295) for other poems by these poets.

Step Three: Introduce the process of creating a cento by reading "[Wholly One: Still](#)" (a cento for *Furious Flower*). Each student will find the poem that is the source of their favorite line from *Furious Flower: Seeding the Future of African American Poetry*.

Step Four: The student will choose another line from that source poem as they also learn the politics of citation and attribution, which the instructor will collate, including the source poet's name, the source poem's title, and the page number of their chosen line from *Furious Flower: Seeding the Future of African American Poetry*.

Step Five: Students will work in groups to create revised drafts of the cento.

Step Six: Students will submit cento revisions to the instructor.

25.

DESIRE: VIOLENCE AND BLACK BODIES - LESSON PLAN

Authors: Tyree Daye, Meta DuEwa Jones, DaMaris B. Hill, Dana A. Williams, L. Lamar Wilson

Target Group: Graduate Seminar

Structure (Activities & Exercises)

Time and Conceptual/Pedagogical Unit Blocks:

40 min x two (with 10-minute break for recentering amid the taxing somatic learning experience)

Step One:

Have students discuss how permission is given, who gives permission or who doesn't, to engage directly with how violence is perpetrated on the Black body.

Step Two:

Discuss the challenges of engaging Black poetry without encouraging appropriation or harm through recitation or performance.

Note: This is not about banning readings/poems/text but about, at the graduate seminar level, engaging these questions for future generations of teachers, activists, poetry lovers.

Step Three:

To literally move beyond the discussion, ask students to discuss their favorite childhood games among the following: Ring Around the Rosie; Eenie Meenie Miney Moe; and Ten Little Indians (as an option, you might play the one they choose).

Step Four:

Discuss the colonial, racist, and imperialist origins of the tropes in the chosen childhood games and review the pre-read primary texts (Komunyakaa, Weatherford, Birdsong, Harris, Simmonds) and essays (Strange, Jordan, Spillers, and Weheliye; for example, Duriel E. Harris's poem "American Counting Rhyme" explores and exploits those to take account of the legacy and impact of violence on children).

Step Five:

Students will renovate the act of child's play, and with this new knowledge, create poetic counter-archives

through their original pieces aimed at inciting empathy and healing (through formal innovations or new rituals).

Learning Goals

Remember, goals often point to a larger purpose, a long-term vision, or a less tangible result.

- This unit will engender dialogue about how Black poets wrestle—often through received forms—with the tropes and stereotypical representations of violences to which their bodies are always already vulnerable and/or are assumed poised to enact on themselves and others.
- This unit will help students develop an understanding of their own biases about violence on Black bodies and their own vulnerability to violence at the hands of Black and Brown bodies.
- This unit will challenge students to interrogate their own foundations to better understand how they have acquired knowledge, developed theories, and established their limits.

Learning Objectives

Remember, objectives tend to be time-limited, measurable actions with tangible outcomes that help push progress toward broader goals.

- To understand how violent language that infuses historical forms (ballad(e)s, nursery rhymes, sonnets, villanelles) may be inaccessible to us as students, based upon our various embodied social locations and the climate in which we learn and teach.
- To identify and attend to embodied and racial differences in poems' imagery, metaphor(s), syntax, and other formal choices.
- To use writing as a means of liberation from and transformation of experiences of violence.
- To enter into a call-and-response dialogue with theoretical (re)framings of the white gaze on Black bodies.

Primary Texts

- Yusef Komunyakaa, "Songs for My Father" (*Furious Flower* 2004, p. 152)
- Carole B. Weatherford, "The Tan Chanteuse" (*Furious Flower* 2004, p. 207)
- Destiny O. Birdsong, "Recovery" (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 162)
- Duriel E. Harris, "American Counting Rhyme," (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 102)

- Kevin Simmonds, “Upright.” (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 265)

Additional Resources

- Sharan Strange, “A Poetics of Empathy,” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 396-399) and A. Van Jordan, “Try to Care about Someone Other Than Yourself: Creating Subtext through Empathy” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 346-351).
- Hortense Spillers, [“Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe”](#) and Alexander G. Weheliye’s response, [“Pornotropes.”](#)
- Excerpts from Ntozake Shange, [For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide](#), with a special focus on Shange’s poetic incorporation of childhood rhymes, and and nursery rhymes (e.g., “mama’s little baby loves shortenin’ bread”).

26.

INTERTEXTUAL EXCHANGES AND INTERGENERATIONAL POETIC CONVERSATIONS: LESSON PLAN

Authors: Tyree Daye, Meta DuEwa Jones, DaMaris B. Hill, Dana A. Williams, L. Lamar Wilson

Target Group: Graduate Seminar

Structure

Time and Conceptual/Pedagogical Unit Blocks:

45 min x three:

One Break (15 min)

One focused writing within the classroom seminar session space: (15 min)

Step One: Graduate students select one prompt from an itemized list of prompts specifically generated from 1-2 of the primary poems.

Step Two: They engage focused writing for the duration of that time period.

Step Three: 1 minute timed read-aloud segmented excerpts from student's focused writing (10-15 mins max).

Step Four: They post their responses to the learning management system, and each student offers a short response to the other students' writing.

Step Five: After the writing and sharing activity has been completed, the students and the faculty leading the session engage in discussion between the primary texts and the secondary texts listed below—included poems and essays in this longer three-hour session.

- Timing is balanced to ensure at least 30 minutes of the classroom discussion involves secondary texts that are poems and another 30 minutes involves texts that are essays

Step Six: After discussing the written text and historical and political contexts, students will be guided to discuss (not write about) 1-2 of the photographs of poets featured on the [Furious Flower Archive](#).

- The prompt for discussion begins: “In this photograph, you are . . .”

Learning Goals

Remember: goals often point to a larger purpose, a long-term vision, or a less tangible result.

- To consider how Black poets participate in intertextual exchanges;
- To develop an appreciation of intergenerational poetic conversations; and
- To demonstrate awareness of the spirit of insurrection inherent in Black poetry.

Learning Objectives

Remember: objectives tend to be time-limited, measurable actions with tangible outcomes that help push progress toward broader goals.

- To understand the varied interpretations of a trope and/or theme (resistance) across a range of poems;
- To identify the literary techniques the poets use to develop the trope and;
- To respond to the poems through guided prompts.

Primary Texts

- Read Taylor Johnson’s “Aeration” (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 109).
- Read the introduction to W.E.B. Du Bois’s [The Souls of Black Folk](#) to discuss the imposition of Blackness as a “problem” for African Americans’ everyday lives (“How does it feel to be a problem?”).
- Read Gwendolyn Brooks’s “The Second Sermon on the Warpland” (*Furious Flower* 2004, pp. 3-4) as a charge to writers.
 - [“Elizabeth Alexander Discusses ‘The Second Sermon on the Warpland by Gwendolyn Brooks’”](#)
 - [A 1986 interview of note](#) (as she’s ending her term of U.S. poet laureate).
 - [“Conversation: Gwendolyn Brooks and S. Denise Hawkins”](#)
- Read Lorenzo Thomas’s “Dangerous Doubts” (*Furious Flower* 2004, p. 148), and compare it to the tone and posture of the speaker in Johnson’s “Aeration.”

Writing Exercise One

View [Krista Franklin's *We Wear the Mask VIII*](#), a 2014 collage on handmade paper, which investigates negative perceptions of women by fusing female bodies with parts of animals, plants, and other organic entities. Then, craft a poem that responds to the image and Johnson's "Aeration."

- Read:
 - Nandi Comer's "Why I Don't Call On Cops" (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 289-290)
 - Jayne Cortez's "There It Is" (*Furious Flower* 2004, pp. 72-73)
 - Natalie Díaz's "[My Brother at 3 A.M.](#)" and "[Prayers or Oubliettes](#)" from [When My Brother Was an Aztec](#) (Copper Canyon Press, 2012), where in one poem, she writes: "Instead of grace, we rattle forks / in our empty bowls."

Writing Exercise Two

- With those poems in your consciousness, spend seven minutes writing about how grace sounded in your childhood home space when you chose not to seek the intervention of a guardian or a municipal or state agency.
- Take a breather from writing to consider this quotation from Toni Morrison's [The Bluest Eye](#):

There is a difference between being put *out* and being put *outdoors*. If you are put out, you go somewhere else; if you are outdoors, there is no place to go. The distinction was subtle but final. Outdoors was the end of something, an irrevocable, physical fact, defining and complementing our metaphysical condition ...Dead doesn't change, and outdoors is here to stay.

- Now, spend an additional seven minutes writing as you contemplate the difference between "calling on cops" and "calling the cops" in terms of the vernacular use of the preposition and care within Black communities, especially when the "state" or "authority" cannot be trusted with care of our bodies, minds, or health. Infuse your poem with details of a personal experience with police or other authorities.

Secondary Texts

(in foci and context for graduate seminar)

The lesson will emphasize that the poems are antecedent and historically crucial to read, view, listen to, and engage with in preparation for the lesson.

- Read Yalie Kamara's "A Haiku Love Letter for Gabby Douglas" (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 53), then

engage Aamna Mohdin's essay, "[For Black women, femininity and feminism are not mutually exclusive.](#)"

Now consider this quotation from [Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's](#) *Half of a Yellow Sun*:

- "There are some things that are so unforgivable that they make other things easily forgivable" (p. 347).

Writing Exercise Three

Then, ponder: What are the rules that govern, fairly or unfairly, how Black girls and women navigate the world? What does it mean for them to break these rules? List 10 unforgivable rules that Black women might need to break in order to realize their fullest potential. Write a haiku sequence that is a love letter to an individual, famous or known only to you, who has defied at least five of these unforgivable rules, taking account of injustices or insensitivities that undergrid these rules.

- Read F. Douglas Brown's "Re-Portrait Your Name, Douglas" (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 30-32) and listen to Earth Wind and Fire's "Reasons" ([lyrics](#), [performance](#)), which his poem references. Then, read [Amiri Baraka's](#) "I Am" and "In the Funk World" (*Furious Flower* 2004, pp. 50-55) and Yusef Komunyakaa's "Songs for My Father" (*Furious Flower* 2004, pp. 152-157).

Writing Exercise Four

Spend some time researching the origins of your name, its etymologies and meanings. Listen to a favorite song that was played in your childhood home as you complete the research, taking note of its key refrains and chorus. Then craft a poem that rehistoricizes America's fraught history through the prism of your and your family members' experiences of coming of age. Using anaphora, epistrophe, apostrophe, and other invocations of repetition, incorporate the refrain in your poem.

- Read DaMaris B. Hill's "A Reckoning: Assata in 1980" (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 198) and discuss the Natasha Trethewey-inspired "[sensibilities](#)" that Hill infused in her poem. Then, read Lucille Clifton's "1994" and Nikki Giovanni's "The Wrong Kitchen" and "Nikki-Rosa" (*Furious Flower* 2004, pp. 69-70; 139-141), both of which inspired the poem. Then consider this excerpt from [Zora Neale Hurston's](#) novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*:

'Ah'll clean 'em, you fry 'em and let's eat,' he said with the assurance of not being refused. They went out into the kitchen and fixed up the hot fish and corn muffins and ate. Then Tea Cake went to the piano without so much as asking and began playing blues and singing, and throwing grins over his shoulder. The sounds lulled Janie to soft slumber and she woke up with Tea Cake combing her hair and scratching the dandruff from her scalp. It made her more comfortable and drowsy" (p. 125).

Writing Exercise Five

Take the next seven minutes to write about love and the kitchen space. You can write about a personal experience or rely on literary examples.

Secondary Texts (Essays)

- Read Joanne Gabbin’s “Introduction” (*Furious Flower* 2004, pp. xvii-xxxii), which emphasizes Gwendolyn Brooks’s humanity and vulnerability.
- Read John H. Bracey’s “Communities and Social Movements in Black Poetry” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 5-20).
- Read Charles E. Cobb Jr., [*This Nonviolent Stuff’ll Get You Killed: How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible*](#) (Basic, 2014) for intergenerational historical context about the complexities of liberation, rebellion, insurrection, and mental health.

27.

POETICS OF BLACK CHILDHOOD - LESSON PLAN

Authors: Tyree Daye, Meta DuEwa Jones, DaMaris B. Hill, Dana A. Williams, L. Lamar Wilson

Target Group: Graduate Seminar

Structure

- Ask students to spend three minutes simulating a “Red Light/Green Light” game. This is done to remind them of childhood in an immediate way and associate that remembrance with bodily movement and a physical experience.
- Each graduate student is tasked with creating an echo poem modeled after a poem that centers childhood (Note: “echo poems” are distinguished from “echo verse.” For further explanation and examples, see poet DaMaris B. Hill’s use of “echo poems” based on Lucile Clifton’s poetry in *A Bound Woman Is a Dangerous Thing*).
- Each graduate student will create/write a poem focusing on one of the following topics:
 - A poem written for children (delimit age).
 - A poem written for an “inner” child within.
 - A poem written from perspective of adult reflecting on childhood.

Learning Goals

Remember, goals often point to a larger purpose, long-term vision, or less tangible result.

- This lesson will engender dialogue about Black childhoods with the tropes and stereotypical representations of childhood experiences in which students’ bodies and senses are engaged.
- This lesson will help students develop an understanding of their [becoming](#) in the context of intersectional identities, particularly within Black and Brown bodies.

- This lesson will challenge students to interrogate their own early childhood experiences and cultural foundations to better understand how they have acquired knowledge, developed theories, and established their limits.

Learning Objectives

Remember, objectives tend to be time-limited, measurable actions with tangible outcomes that help push progress toward broader goals.

- To understand how poetry about childhoods infuses historical forms (ballad(e)s, nursery rhymes, sonnets, villanelles) and notions of intersectional identity as a means of understanding our various embodied social locations and the climate in which we learn and teach.
- To identify and attend to intersecting embodied differences (racial, gendered, class, and etc.) in poems' imagery, metaphor(s), syntax, and other formal choices.
- To use writing as a means of exploring and transforming experiences of childhoods.
- To enter into a call-and-response dialogue with theoretical (re)framings of childhoods within the context of Black bodies.

Primary Texts: Poems for Focused Study

Beyond the Binary

- Arisa White, "Loni, with a martini and sapphire balls," (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 310)
- Xandria Phillips "A Fruit We Never Tasted" (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 201-202)
- Rickey Laurentiis, "Conditions for a Southern Gothic" (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 56)
- Danez Smith "For the Dead Homie" (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 130-132)

Boyhood

- Gerald Barrax, "[Jeopardy](#)" (from the 1994 conference, a study guide)
- Tyree Daye, "[When My Mother Had the World on Her Mind, Crickets in Her Ear,](#)" (from [River Hymns](#), 2017)

Girlhood

- [Nikki Giovanni](#), “The Wrong Kitchen” and “Nikki-Rosa” (1:24:45-) (*Furious Flower* 2004, pp. 139-140)
- Elizabeth Alexander, “Passage” (*Furious Flower* 2004, pp. 225-226)
- Mahtem Shiferraw, “The Silences,” (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 63)

Primary Concept/Background Texts (Books/Book Covers for Focused Study)

Context Books for Children's Lit (Understudied Genre Black Poets Innovate)

- Nikki Giovanni, *Genie in a Jar*
- Lucille Clifton (myriad books in children's lit/Everett Anderson series)
- Marilyn Nelson, *A Wreath for Emmett Till*, *Fortune's Bones*
- Alexis DeVeaux interview with June Jordan, *Essence Magazine*, “Who Look at Me?” ([an excerpt from her site](#) and the [Harvard digital archive](#))
- Virginia Hamilton, *Zeely* ([Giovanni speaks extensively about her influence, and especially the book Zeely](#))
- Janice Harrington, “[To the White Girl Who Scolded Me That Not Everything Is about Race](#)”
- E. Ethelbert Miller, “[Mississippi](#),” “[Baldwin](#)”
- Jacqueline Woodson, *Brown Girl Dreaming* (long epic poem in novella form)
- Mahogany L. Browne, *Black Girl Magic*

Supplemental Texts for Childhood Reading

- For poetry collection reflecting on Black childhood, see:
 - Natasha Trethewey's [Domestic Work](#) (Graywolf, 2000)
 - Jericho Brown's [Please](#) (New Issues, 2008)
 - L. Lamar Wilson's [Sacrilegion](#) (Carolina Wren/Blair, 2013)
 - Rickey Laurentiis's [Boy With Thorn](#) (U of Pittsburgh, 2015)
 - Clemonce Heard's [Tragic City](#) (Anhinga, 2021)
 - Donika Kelly's [The Renunciations](#) (Graywolf, 2021)
- For recent nonfiction meditations on Black childhood, see:
 - Darnell L. Moore's [No Ashes in the Fire: Coming of Age Black and Free in America](#) (Nation Books,

2018)

- Imani Perry's [*Breathe: A Letter to My Sons*](#) (Beacon, 2019)
- Kiese Laymon's [*Heavy: An American Memoir*](#) (Scribner, 2019)
- Hari Ziyad's [*Black Boy Out of Time*](#) (Little A, 2021)
- Elizabeth Alexander's [*The Trayvon Generation*](#) (Grand Central Publishing, 2022).
- For scholarship that offers both historical context for contemporary Black letters on childhood, consider:
 - Nazera Sadiq Wright's [*Black Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century*](#) (U of Illinois, 2016)
 - Janaka Bowman Lewis's [*Light and Legacies: Stories of Black Girlhood and Liberation*](#) (U of South Carolina, 2023)

28.

THE POETICS OF GRACE - LESSON PLAN

Authors: Tyree Daye, Meta DuEwa Jones, DaMaris B. Hill, Dana A. Williams, L. Lamar Wilson

Target Group: Graduate Seminar

“This is love. And this is where I need to be.”

–Rita Dove

This assignment draws inspiration from [Panel 10 of Jacob Lawrence’s Migration Series \(1941\)](#). For the Museum of Modern Art’s curated series on the 60 panels, featuring Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown, Rita Dove, Natasha Trethewey, and other Black poets inspired by Lawrence’s art, curated by Elizabeth Alexander, see [here](#).

Defining Key Terms

Wicked:

- morally very bad or evil
- fierce, vicious
- disgustingly unpleasant

Grace:

- ease of movement or bearing
- disposition to kindness

Wicked Grace (Re)definitions (vis-a-vis Furious Flower Poets’ Black Consciousness)

A poetic posture whose elegance, refinement, and goodwill defies that which would be considered morally wrong in the eyes of those innured to the bear trap of white supremacy patriarchy.

Primary Poetic Examples

- Remica Bingham-Risher, “Fish Fry” (*Furious Flower* 2019, p. 28)
- DaMaris B. Hill, “Miz Lucille” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 45-46)

Structure

Time and Conceptual/ Pedagogical Unit Blocks

45 min x two

Focused Writing on Site within the Seminar Session (45 min)

- Graduate students select from the poems below to create small presentations they can provide to undergraduate students discussing how a poem of their choice represents one or more of the definitions provided for wicked grace.
- Graduate students select two secondary sources to provide a historical context for the poems they selected.
- Graduate students post and select a classmate’s presentation to determine how an undergraduate may respond to the presentation.

Learning Goals

Remember: Goals often point to a larger purpose, a long-term vision, or a less tangible result.

- To consider how Black poets’ works disrupt [white supremacist heteropatriarchy](#) and to redefine and reimagine grace.
- To demonstrate an ability to provide clear class presentations to undergraduate students.

Learning Objectives

Remember: Objectives tend to be time-limited, measurable actions with tangible outcomes that help push progress toward broader goals.

- To understand the varied interpretations of grace as a form of resistance across a range of poems.
- To identify poetic techniques of grace that disrupt white supremacist heteropatriarchy.
- To articulate attributes of grace in the form of a presentation for undergraduate students.

Additional Resources from *Furious Flower*, 2019

Essays

- Rita Dove, “Foreword,” (pp. xvii-xx)
- Meta DuEwa Jones, “The String of Grace: Renovating New Rhythms in the Present-Future of Black Poetry and Music” (pp. 213-230)
- Sharan Strange, “A Poetics of Empathy” (pp. 396-399)

Poems

- With her “Foreword” for the 2019 anthology in mind, read Dove’s “Parsley,” a [villanelle](#)* read at the [1994 Furious Flower conference](#), and [“Say Grace,”](#) her response to [Jacob Lawrence Migration Series Poetry Suite](#).
- F. Douglas Brown, “Re-Portrait Your Name, Douglas” (pp. 30-32)
- Safia Elhillo, “self-portrait with no flag” (pp. 36-37)
- Duriel E. Harris, “Making” (pp. 42-44)
- JP Howard, “Praise Poem for My Leo Self” (pp. 49-50)
- Yalie Kamara, “A Haiku Love Letter for Gabby Douglas” (p. 53)
- Anastacia-Renée, “prayer for the unseen” (p. 62)
- T’ai Freedom Ford, “#notorious” (p. 99)
- Jericho Brown, “The Long Way” (pp. 178-179)

Additional Resources

- Watch DaMaris B. Hill discuss [A Bound Woman Is a Dangerous Thing: The Incarceration of Black Women from Harriet Tubman to Sandra Bland](#) on C-SPAN. Read the 2019 Bloomsbury title [here](#).
- View Remica Bingham-Risher discuss [Soul Culture: Black Poets, Books, and Questions That Grew Me Up with E. Ethelbert Miller](#). Read the 2023 Penguin/Random House essay collection in which Bingham-Risher expounds on the making of “Fish Fry” and other poems [here](#).
- Check out this lesson plan: [“Restorative Practices: Healing After Incarceration – Community Program.”](#)

**Dove’s use of this form with origins among the French-speaking proves subversive for many reasons. Chiefly, it underscores the irony that Dominican Republic dictator Rafael Trujillo, a mixed-race leader of Haitian descent*

through his mother's mother, refused to show grace to those who could not hide their accents while also gracefully humanizing his complex relationship with his maternal ancestry.

29.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES: HEALING AFTER INCARCERATION - COMMUNITY PROGRAM

Authors: Shameka Cunningham, McKinley E. Melton, Adrienne Danyelle Oliver, Carmin Wong

Target Group: Program designed for recently incarcerated community members (adult learners)

“What do we do with what we feel? How do we name our experiences?”

Poem: “When the Therapist Asks You to Recount, You Have to Say It” by Aricka Foreman (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 100-101)

Start with an exercise to ground participants in the space:

- Communal breathing exercise
- Setting an intention: what brought you to this space, and what do you hope to gain while here?

Guided meditation: “What’s a thing you’ve never told anyone?” (not to be shared, just meditated upon)

Frame Black literature as “speaking the unspeakable” and giving language to the unlanguageable, highlighting that aspect of the tradition as a means of setting up Foreman’s poem and the writing exercises.

- Excerpts from Toni Morrison’s [“Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature”](#) (*Michigan Quarterly Review* 28, 1989, pp. 1-34).
- Excerpts from Dominique Christina’s “Blood in My Eye: The Poetics of Trauma and Memory” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 315-316).

Read Aricka Foreman’s “When the Therapist Asks You to Recount, You Have to Say It.”

- First read: just sit with the experience.

- Second read: name a moment that resonates with you and why?
 - Invite participants to share, with facilitator offering commentary that frames their observations/responses within language of poetic craft.

Guided discussion through the elements of the poem:

- Speaker
- Title
- Structure/Form
- Craft elements
- If it doesn't come up through the participants, what do we make of the creation of "ogs?"
 - Act of empowerment to name your villain/predator
 - Giving language to the unlanguageable, speaking the unspeakable

Design an exercise that can prompt participants toward writing.

- Give "that thing" that you can't talk about a name and a definition (model from "og") What is "og?" Define.
- Let's write a cento together, beginning with the line: "It starts this way."

Collaborate in the creation of a collage poem.

- Lead discussion/response to collage poem following reading.
- Wrap up discussion of individual lines as part of a collective experience we've all now shared.

Set another intention as you close the session and prepare to leave the space.

PART IV

ASSIGNMENTS AND PROMPTS

"Black poetry matters because humanity matters."

– Adrienne Danyelle Oliver



30.

FOOD FOR BONDING - ACTIVITIES

Authors: Mary Beth Cancienne, Hayes Davis, Teri Cross Davis, Brian Hannon, TJ Hendrix

Target Group: Middle School (7th-8th grade)

Originally from [Food for Bonding, Food for Resistance Unit Plan](#)

Icebreaker: Ask your students:

- What is your favorite dessert?
- What is your favorite family dessert?
- What is a traditional food in your family?
- Instruct them to walk around the room and share their responses with their peers. After 3-4 minutes, have your students take a seat and ask a few of them to share with the whole group. **(5 minutes)**

Quick Write: Have your students write about a memory that includes either their favorite dessert or a traditional family food. **(5 minutes)**

- What does the food taste like?
- What sound does it make when you eat it?
- What does it smell like?
- What does it look like?
- Describe its colors and textures.

[Mini-lesson](#) on imagery/sensory language. **(3 minutes)**

Have your students practice the concept of sensory details in writing using cookies, chocolate, or another food. Students will be responsible for developing one descriptor for each of the five senses (i.e., taste, smell, feel, see, hear). **(10 minutes)**

Read aloud “Bread Pudding Grandmamma” by Darrel Alejandro Holnes (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 47-48).

Break the students into groups and assign each one a specific stanza. Each group is responsible for annotating the stanza, circling the imagery and sensory details, and writing how/why the language contributes to the poem’s overall tone or meaning. In other words, ask the students to identify how the imagery/sensory language makes the poem “feel.” **(20 minutes)**

Ask each group to share their annotated stanza with the rest of the class. As the students present, ask the rest of the class to make additional annotations based on their peers' responses. **(20 minutes)**

Hold a whole class discussion of the poem, focusing on the sensory language of the piece. Students can discuss how the sensory language contributes to the tone/feeling of the poem. **(10 minutes)**

Ask your students to return to what they wrote during the quick write and revise it by writing a poem using the structure of "Bread Pudding Grandmamma" (4-6 lines), focusing on writing more sensory details and utilizing them to enhance the meaning of their poems. Ask students to title their poems. Students can share voluntarily when they are done. **(10 minutes)**

31.

ANTICIPATING A DISCUSSION ON THE GHAZAL - PRESENTATION ASSIGNMENT

Authors: Anastacia-Reneé, DaMaris B. Hill, Mary Beth Cancienne, McKinley E. Melton

Target Group: Undergraduate

Assignment – Emphasis on the Ghazal (For a Literature Course)

Anticipating a lesson on ghazals

Encouraging students to develop familiarity with poetic forms can be challenging, particularly with a form as layered as the ghazal. The ghazal, “originally an Arabic verse form dealing with loss and romantic love,” consists of “syntactically and grammatically complete couplets” with “an intricate rhyme scheme” wherein “each couplet ends on the same word or phrase (the radif), and is preceded by the couplet’s rhyming word (the qafia, which appears twice in the first couplet)” and also incorporates the rule that “the last couplet includes a proper name, often of the poet’s” ([from The Poetry Foundation](#)). In order to help students understand the significance of the ghazal and develop a greater level of comfort and confidence in discussing it, both as a tradition and a popular form in contemporary poetry, educators might consider incorporating this presentation assignment.

The primary learning objectives:

- Identify and articulate formal elements of a poem, with an emphasis on the ghazal.
- Strengthen students’ familiarity with key terms and elements of craft.
- Strengthen students’ skills in public speaking and communication of ideas and concepts.

Assignment: Develop a 8-10 minute presentation for class. Research the word that’s repeated in one of the assigned ghazals and provide context for the class discussion.

Presentation should consider (for the word/phrase):

- Socio-cultural context
- Spiritual/religious context
- Ancient and present contexts
- Repetition and rhythm

[Read the Poetry Foundation entry on the ghazal.](#)

Example for a student to “model” – [Evie Shockley’s “where you are planted”](#)

Guiding Questions:

- What does “southern trees” bring to mind for you?
- What sociohistorical or sociopolitical contexts does the phrase “southern trees” bring with it to the poem?
- What effect does the repetition of the phrase have on you as a reader?
- Do your ideas change as you encounter the phrase throughout the poem? How? Why?

Supplemental Readings

- [Dawn Lundy Martin and Adam Fitzgerald – “On the Black Avant-garde, Trigger Warnings, and Life in East Hampton”](#)
- Evie Shockley – “Race, Experiments, and the Black Avant-Garde” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 69-82).
- Meta DuEwa Jones – “The String of Grace: Renovating New Rhythms in the Present-Future of Black Poetry and Music” (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 213-230).

32.

CONTEMPORARY BLACK POETRY AND POETICS - WRITING PROMPTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Authors: Anastacia-Reneé, Ariana Benson, Leona Sevick, James Smethurst

Target Group: Undergraduate

Originally from [*Flowering Furiously – Contemporary Black Poetry and Poetics \(Introduction to Black Poetry\) Syllabus*](#)

Writing the “Identity”—exploring belonging to groups (racial, ethnic, gendered, generational, and cultures)

Complete **one** of the three following free-write prompts:

- Write about a personal rite of passage. What sights do you see, what do you smell, hear, taste, *feel*? Why is it important to you? Who were you before the rite of passage, and how did you change after?
- What is your soundtrack for the week? In fourteen lines, list the sounds you’ve heard, the music that is the background of your life, the voices that you’ve heard speak or that reverberate in your head.
- What is your season today? What does this reveal about how you’re feeling, what you’ve been thinking about, what your world looks like, what you want it to be like?

Writing Recorded/Public History

Writing prompt/homework activity: Choose a current event, a historical event, or an archival object (photograph, letter, etc.) that interests you and answer the following questions:

- What is the prevailing myth of this piece—**what/whose story does it most obviously tell?**
- How could you revise and/or undercut the narrative of this piece—**what/whose story exists beneath the surface, waiting to be told?**

Forms Received and Not

Homework Assignment (can be started in class, time permitting, and completed as homework):

- Find a “traditional” sonnet written by a poet we are not reading in this class (students can Google sonnets and find a variety).
- Compare the sonnet to [Danez Smith’s “crown.”](#) Make notes.
- In a brief response paper (two pages), discuss how Smith’s “crown” departs from the traditional sonnet. In your response, also consider how Smith is using the sonnet form to address the Black experience.

Writing prompt (begin in class and finish as homework)

- Rewrite a portion of one of the poems in this unit in a *different* received or experimental form. Reflect on these changes and then answer these two questions in a brief (one page) response:
 - How does it change the meaning/experience of this poem?
 - Does the new form offer new meanings/possibilities?

Writing Queerness

Writing Assignment:

- Write a 20-line *List Poem*. “Here’s What I Want The World To Know...”
- Write a 20-line *Praise Poem* for any person living or dead.

33.

IDENTITY SOCIAL LOCATION PROMPT - ESSAY ASSIGNMENT

Authors: allia abduallah-matta, Angel Dye, Shauna Morgan, Dave Wooley

Target Group: Advanced Undergraduate

Note: Practitioners can adapt the questions as needed, but this assignment requires that students process identity and social location in order to: a) think about the ways in which they have been taught to see and think about “others,” and b) allow them to think about their own identity/social location/positionality with critical analysis and reflection.

Critical Reflection—Identity & Social Location

This critical reflection paper will provide you with the opportunity to synthesize, reflect, question, and struggle with issues that are raised in the class, in the reading material, and for you personally. Incorporate the applicable readings to ground your ideas and discussion points. **References should be properly cited using MLA format.** *Instructor chooses the page number guidelines.*

Questions for Critical Reflection

- What were your expectations coming into this class? What are you becoming aware of about Black Poetry (i.e., feelings, previously held information) as you read, watch, and discuss the course texts?
- Describe and reflect on your racial and gendered identities as well as your membership in two other social identity groups (class, language, ethnicity, ability, sexuality, ethnoreligion, nation, etc.). When were you first aware of these identities? What are your earliest memories about these identities? What did your family and friends communicate to you about these identities? What messages did you get about your identities in school, media, and other institutions? How has it **felt** and what has it **meant** to belong to your social identity group(s)?
- What information did you receive from family/community/society about social identities **that differ from yours**? How does what you have learned **connect to and or disrupt depictions of others** in the

mainstream societal discourse, the media, and other institutions? What information were you given about how to deal with or talk about issues concerning identity and oppression?

- How has your race and gender intersected with one other of your social identities?
- In what ways do your identities interface or interact with the course material?

Your essay must indicate that a) you are engaging with these questions and b) you are able to support your discussion with references to your own identity, social location/positionality, and the readings.

Use key terms and concepts to help you discuss the complexities of identity.

As a comparative text, students could read “Black Like Everything” by Thylias Moss (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 367-372).

34.

CLOSE READING - ANALYTICAL RESPONSE OR LARGER ESSAY ASSIGNMENT

Authors: allia abduallah-matta, Angel Dye, Shauna Morgan, Dave Wooley

Target Group: Advanced Undergraduate

Poetry Close Reading Assignment

Note: This assignment can be used in conjunction with [“The Poem Breakdown”](#) or it can be used as a stand-alone, larger, analytical assignment. The instructor can modify the numbers of assigned poems and/or the weeks covered in the assignment.

Choose 2-4 poems from the assigned readings from weeks 1-7. Select poems that may have similar/contrasting threads of content, shared stylistic or formal elements, or less obvious connections. In any case, you will be close reading the poems and drawing on one of the assigned scholarly essays for the semester to analyze the poems.

Reading line-by-line, consider the following for each of your selected poems:

- Are there words or phrases that have multiple meanings? What are those words and phrases? Do you have access to all of those meanings and layers?
- Are there words you do not know? What are those words, and how do you move through the poem without ignoring words you are unfamiliar with?
- What images appear in the poem? Images are sensory moments that you can see, hear, taste, touch, and/or smell.
- How does the title of the poem show up in the poem itself? Is the title explicit, implicit, abstract, or something else?
- What is the poem about in your reading of it? This question is not asking you to explain or define what the poem means. How do you experience the poem? What do you understand of its content, and what allusions or connections can you identify in it?

Now, considering all the poems together, respond to the following:

- What major differences are there between your poems? Think about content, style, form, and visual presentation on the page.
- What major similarities are there between your poems? Do they approach a similar topic? Do they complicate something or present a problem? Do they open up a dimension of Black life or experience?
- When considered in conversation with one another, how do these texts amplify the meaning, message, and aesthetic elements present within each text?

35.

COLLABORATIVE DIGITAL MIXTAPE - GROUP ASSIGNMENT

Authors: allia abduallah-matta, Angel Dye, Shauna Morgan,
Dave Wooley

Target Audience: Advanced Undergraduate

Collaborative Digital Mixtape

This project should be completed in groups of 3-5 students

The Mixtape Project is your opportunity to explore an issue of race/gender/equity reflected through the poetry that we have encountered throughout the course. The foundational piece of this project is the production of a **mixtape track**. This mixtape track will consist of three distinct **layers**. Each layer should be between 90 seconds to three minutes long, and they should be fairly balanced in length. If there is a dominant layer, it should be the discussion of the issue, which is the second layer.

The first layer is audio from your subject poem. This may be a reading of the poem by the group or a reading by the poet or another speaker. However, your group must introduce the reading. You should focus your poem choice for this track on the theme or subject that you are exploring. The poem should speak directly to that idea.

The second layer is your commentary about your chosen theme, topic, or subject. In this section, you are explaining why this topic is important to our foundational course goal of inquiry into liberation and the Black poetic tradition. How is the idea of liberation in the tradition of Black poetics present in the foundational text, and what resonance does it have to a specific aspect of the Black experience in relation to an artistic tradition towards liberation? What is the poem's effect on the audience? You might also choose to discuss craft and focus on the specific tools of poetic writing or artistic choices.

The third layer is where you bring in an outside source to inform your discussion. In this layer you will deepen the conversation around your topic by incorporating literary criticism, reviews, articles, or other secondary works to reinforce your position or to put your position in context with other texts.

Each of these layers should come together to form a cohesive audio track. You should be sure to introduce the layers and use appropriate transitions between layers so that your track is unified. You should also use

appropriate music in transitions and, possibly, as a backing musical bed for the spoken elements of the track. The music should help to create the mood of your presentation, and it should not overwhelm your spoken pieces.

The other parts of your Mixtape Track “release” package

Cover Art: You must create a cover for your Mixtape Track. It should include a strong visual that represents the theme of your project, the title of your track, and your name. It should be saved as a JPG, TIFF, or PNG file. When you submit your image, also write out any credits for images you borrowed for your cover, or credit yourself if you create original artwork.

Liner Notes: These instructions are adapted from the template that was created by Dr. Tyechia Thompson and Dr. David Green. Your digital Mixtape Track must be accompanied by at least 500 words of liner notes **for each student in the group**. The liner notes must include:

- the title of your track;
- the names of the layers (appearing as “samples”) on your track;
- explanations of each layer (the reason you made the choices that you did, and the significance of those choices);
- your “mixing” decisions (why did you arrange, alter, etc. your track the way you did?); and
- a significant detail about the theme for your track/mixtape.

The purpose of the liner notes is for you to reflect on your process and for you to explain the decisions you made in that process. Through your liner notes, we can gain a better understanding of your track, which will allow us to look for (listen for) things that we might have missed if we hadn’t gotten insight into your process.

Works Cited: The project must include a works cited page, presented in an appropriate citation format at the discretion of the course instructor.

Your Mixtape Release Package should be presented as a PowerPoint, Google Slides, Prezi, or other appropriate presentation platform at the discretion and approval of the course instructor.

All presentation packages should be formatted with a Cover Art page, a Mixtape Track page (your audio production), individual student liner notes pages, and a works cited page.

Presentations will be presented in class by the groups.

Instructor’s Note: In this age of digital streaming, students may not be familiar with the concept of “liner notes,” which were where an artist (and representatives of the artists) could write about the process of creating the music, offer thanks to the people who supported the production of the music, or just write personal notes to the listeners and fans within the jacket of an album or a CD. It is in this spirit that liner notes are included in the project, as a space for reflection on the process. [This essay](#) might be a useful tool for explaining what liner notes do.

36.

DISCUSSANT PRESENTATIONS - ASSIGNMENT

Authors: allia abduallah-matta, Angel Dye, Shauna Morgan,
Dave Wooley

Target Audience: Advanced Undergraduate

Discussant Presentation Guidelines

Your **individual/partner group presentation** is based on the assigned reading(s) for the given date on the course calendar. Construct a 5-7 minute presentation that addresses the reading and provides information that is beneficial to your classmates' understanding of the given piece. Attempt to facilitate a discussion about the reading by **offering keywords/concepts/ideas and framing significant issues**. You may also **use visual images and video clips as appropriate**.

Your goal is to **discuss and comment on the context of the text (poem) and how it connects to the larger theme(s) of the course. Examine the readings, pick out the main themes and important ideas, and develop a short presentation and essay (2-3 pages) on the topics**. For the presentation, develop a clear discussion that demonstrates mastery of the readings. Focus on one or two key concepts or debates and pose specific questions to promote discussion.

For example, how does the text represent a Black aesthetic, culture, voice, and/or presence in the larger society? How might the text also provide commentary about the climate of race, class, gender, and politics in the society? If the text is connected to a specific moment in time or a literary moment (ex. Reconstruction or The Harlem Renaissance), provide a comment about how this is significant. Does the text teach us anything about the Black experience or literary presence?

You may refer to one of the following discussion questions to help you frame/complicate your consideration of the text:

Discussion Questions

- How do we draw connections and distinctions among the key figures, voices, and influences of Black

literary and political tradition(s)?

- How do we engage literature as an example of cultural production—as informed by the historical predicament in which it is produced and also as it reflects upon history and culture?
- What is the Black experience? How do poets and playwrights define and capture the complexities of the Black experience in the US/Americas?
- What are the links between African American literary and cultural productions and the changes in the political and social landscape of the United States and the global Black world?
- Do the struggle for freedom and the quest for self-definition shape the narratives which emerge within Black literary traditions?
- What is resistance and how do African Americans (& African Diasporic peoples) exercise strategies of resistance?
- How does the articulation of race—and its relationship to gender, sexuality, class, etc.—shift over time, and how is this reflected in the literature as possible representations of Black culture and communities?

Lastly, **your discussion should connect the complexities of the text and/or moment in time to our contemporary understanding and/or the presence of these issues in American society.** You should also offer 1-2 thoughtful and well-considered questions/prompts to provide a catalyst to the discussion of the day. Avoid prompts such as “How do you feel about...?” or “Did you like...?” These are much less productive questions than those that allow us to **thoroughly interrogate, analyze, and examine the themes and issues** being raised in the literature.

Please submit your written notes/analysis of the presentation. Though you may work on this with a partner, **each person is an individual on the larger panel for that day and must submit their typed presentation/discussant notes** on the day of the presentation.

You will receive two grades: one based on the caliber/depth of the written content submitted and the other on the quality of your presentation.

37.

POEM FAMILY TREE - PROJECT

Authors: allia abduallah-matta, Angel Dye, Shauna Morgan, Dave Wooley

Target Group: Advanced Undergraduate

Project Overview

The Poem Family Tree project requires students to critically analyze a poem and identify the antecedents or “relatives” from which it borrows or to which it connects. These might be allusions, influences, epigraphs, after poems, golden shovel poems, and/or historical or communal references, but they must represent some tethering to the past that establishes a connection throughout the continuum of the Black experience and Black aesthetic productions. In their poem tree analysis, students will consider the historical role that Black music, poetry, literature, and art played in resistance to anti-blackness and systems of white supremacy.

In establishing connections across time and space through the identified poetic “relatives,” students will deconstruct the artistic tapestry of their subject poem through a research paradigm that mimics what hip hop DJs refer to as “digging in the crates;” a means of finding the source material that informed the subject song.

In this critical “pulling apart,” students will have an opportunity to explore the context in which the original source material existed as both a social critique and critical solution to a system problem of oppression. They will then put that historical framework in conversation with the contemporary context in which their subject poem exists.

Student Task

First, choose a poem to focus on for your analysis. You can choose any poem from the syllabus or any poem of your choice from a Furious Flower anthology. Document your choice by identifying the poem title, the name of the poet, the original site of publication, as well as the year the poem was published (if known).

Secondly, write a short biography of the poet. Include their relevant dates, accomplishments, noteworthy publications, and a description of their poetic production. The biography should be no longer than 200 words, and it should be accompanied by an image of the poet.

Then, write a short summary and analysis of the poem. What is the poem about, and what is the thematic work that the poem does? This description and short analysis should be 300 words or less.

Next, identify three “relatives” of the poem that belong in that poem’s family tree. In other words, identify three references, influences, or allusions that you recognize in the poem. For each of the “relatives” that you identify, you must do the following:

- Identify how the reference appears in the poem.
- Explain the connection between the poem and the “relative.”
- Discuss how the use of the “relative” in the poem creates a specific effect. In other words, why do you think the poet chose to employ this reference? How does it add depth of meaning and complexity to the poem? Each “relative” should be presented with supporting visual elements and appropriate links to any digital media that reference the “relative” and add context to the connection between the “relative” and the subject poem.

Lastly, the project must include a works cited page, presented in an appropriate citation format at the discretion of the course instructor.

You may format your project as a word document, graphic organizer, a PowerPoint or Prezi presentation, or any other presentation model that the course instructor approves.

38.

THE POETIC INTERSECTIONALITY OF IDENTITIES: 'GENIUS'-ING A POEM - ASSIGNMENT

Authors: allia abduallah-matta, Ariana Benson, Hayes Davis
Target Group: Advanced Undergraduate, Graduate

Note: Practitioners should introduce and frame intersectionality

Unable to grasp the importance of Black women's intersectional experiences, not only courts, but feminist and civil rights thinkers as well have treated Black women in ways that deny both the unique compoundedness of their situation and the centrality of their experiences to the larger classes of women and Blacks. Black women are regarded either as too much like women or Blacks and the compounded nature of their experience is absorbed into the collective experiences of either group or as too different, in which case Black women's Blackness or femaleness sometimes has placed their needs and perspectives at the margin of the feminist and Black liberationist agendas.

Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw
 from "[Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex](#): A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics"
University of Chicago Legal Forum, Volume 1989, Issue One, Article Eight

Read: "Toward a Pan-African Poetics" by Kwame Dawes (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 147-153).

Use this essay to provide a diasporic context for the concept of intersectionality. See excerpts below for framing examples.

...Identities are formed by the positive exploration of an essence—an essential self, if you will. In that sense, an identity affirms something that preexists and that emerges out of a positive understanding of who we are and what makes us who we are. At the same time, however, a collective identity may be imposed and yet embraced out of necessity. The logic is simple. If one's enemy sets you off as a single entity so as to be able to manage you and to rationalize its system of abuse, exploitation and control, the alliance to resist this phenomenon has been handed to you, and ignoring it is usually a mistake (p. 147).

"I am a subject of Pan-Africanism. This is a simple fact of my birth, my nurture, and the choices I have made as an adult in the modern world" (p. 148).

Read: "Voyage of Kianda: Art Formerly Known As *The Sable Venus* Speaks Back" by Sherese Francis (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 194-197).

Assignment One: Poetry Genius

This assignment was inspired by the "[Genius](#)" website—as in *Rap Genius*—as a way to **teach students about the practices of close reading and textual intersectionality**: that is, understanding the ways that **poems derive meaning from and build upon referring to history, identity, personal culture, and even other poets and poems**.

This assignment requires some pre-work on the part of the instructor: select a poem that contains an abundance of potential "genius points"—places where references to language, culture, history, identity, etc. can be researched and discussed in a way that adds further context to the poem—and highlight them within the text of the poem.

Then, have students select six "genius points" (more on this below) to research and analyze for context, added meaning, and potential connection with other poems. In the following class, discuss students' annotations with the following questions in mind:

- What **new information about language, culture, history, and/or identity** did you discover in one of your annotations?
- Which **"genius points" stumped the class** (were left blank/un-annotated)? Let's research them together and see what discoveries we can make about these points.

On "Genius Points:"

"Genius Points" fall into two major categories:

- **Cultural Reference:** terms specific to an identity group
- **Historical or Literary Allusion:** terms rooted in/derived from specific history or work of literature

Instructors, when reading the poem before the assignment, should **identify "genius points" of discovery, and place them into one of two categories**. It may be helpful to go through the text of the poem and highlight "genius points," using a different color for each of the aforementioned categories. (Ex. in the Francis poem below, **"blackface"** would be highlighted blue, so that students understand that they should use this "genius point" to do research on **the term and its history, as well as its use in other poems**). Then have

students read the assigned poem and choose six of the “genius points” (two from each category) the instructor has outlined:

Example: Using the below “genius points” from “Voyage of Kianda: Art Formerly Known As *The Sable Venus* Speaks Back” by Sherese Francis, select and annotate three “genius points” from each category.

Historical “genius points” (line number): blackface (4), crossing the ocean (11), my arrival (15), middle passage (36-7), “Crossing the Kalunga” (38), belly of your ship (46), manifest destiny (53), “whipped/them into Delphi” (80-1), Poseidon (87), Angola (93), Anglo Union Jack (94), “Louisiana prison/after it was a plantation” (96-7), “Embedded deep within me” (116-17)

Cultural/Intersectional “genius points” (line number): token black (18), white gods (19), white pearl (42), dancing the semba (60), congo cobras (64), Kipula and n’golo (72), capoeira (73), leafy greens, okra, fish in calulu, caruru and callaloo (74-5), Laveau (76), gumbo (77), Zombi (78), Nzambi and Evambi (79), chimpanzee (90), “babbling fool” (91), baboon-gargoyle (92), Quilombo and Maroon (101), Calypso (105),

Potential for Accessibility/Community Use: After completing the assignment, the poem will have been “genius-ed”—complete with helpful explanations of language, historical/cultural references, and literary allusions—much like a song on *Rap Genius*. **The annotated poem itself then becomes a community education tool that can be used to explain certain more difficult-to-understand parts of poems for all levels of education and information access.** This way, folks (thinking of those in community workshops and/or younger folks who may not know all the references or histories a poem utilizes) across multiple levels of access and education are given a tool through which to read and appreciate the poem. These could be compiled into a database as well.

Assignment Two:

Find another poem from *Furious Flower: Seeding the Future of African American Poetry* that corresponds well with the Francis poem (Example: “Girl with the golden contacts at the Walmart” by Opal Moore, p. 114) based on sharing language with one of the “Genius points.”

Have students write a short poetry explanation (*instructor chooses the page number guidelines*) that compares the way both poems use the shared “genius point(s),” exploring how the “genius point” works similarly and differently in each poem and the ways in which the poems point to the layers of intersectional identity.

Additional Resources:

- “Combahee River Collective Statement.” The Combahee River Collective (1977).
- [“The Urgency of Intersectionality” \(TED Talk\) by Kimberlé Crenshaw](#)
- Morgan, Joan. *When the Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: A Hip-Hop Feminist Breaks It Down*.

Simon & Schuster, (2000).

- Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981) State University of New York Press; 4th edition (March 1, 2015).

39.

FINAL COURSE REFLECTION - ESSAY ASSIGNMENT

Authors: allia abduallah-matta, Angel Dye, Shauna Morgan, Dave Wooley

Target Audience: Advanced Undergraduate

Over the course of the semester, we have engaged in a conversation about the ways in which Black poetry, Black experience(s), Black aesthetics, and Black liberatory moves are expressed within the Black literary tradition. We have read diverse iterations of “symbolic voice” (identity/utterance/agency) as representative of the Black experience, struggle, and resistance, and we have used the literature to note historical periods and cultural moments, the political and socio-economic circumstances of Black people, and expressions of agency and resistance.

Write a final reflection that addresses your top five texts. What were the poems, poets, critical essays, or supplemental texts that most resonated with you? What did you learn about the Black experience, Black aesthetics, Black poetics, Black liberatory practices, and the culture and politics of the Black literary tradition? What are your final takeaways about the significance of Black poetry as liberatory practice?

Papers should be between 900-1200 words.

PART V

INSTRUCTOR RESOURCES

"Poetry isn't going to stop a bullet, but it might make someone think twice about picking up a gun."

– Ariana Benson



40.

TEACHER'S GUIDE TO TEACHING "REVISION AS CRAFT SEMINAR"

Authors: Ariana Benson, Brian Hannon, Adrienne Danyelle Oliver

Target Group: Educators

This seminar, focusing on "Revision as Craft," has two primary objectives. First, students are invited to analyze poetry by taking into account what a poet has shared about their writing process, understanding the role of revision in producing a final version of a poem. Secondly, students are invited to consider their own approach to revision as an integral part of their writing process. This resource is intended to support educators in their effort to meet these objectives, with a guided approach to teaching "Revision as Craft" to students who are both working to critically analyze the writing of others as well as to produce their own.

General Resources

- [Back Draft: John Murillo](#)
- [Seven Contemporary Poets on Revision](#)
- [Back Draft: Conversations with writers about revision](#)
- [Presentation Slides](#)

Opening Slide: What is craft?

Read [Ama Codjoe's "Garden of the Gods"](#) (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 182-183).

[Ama Codjoe Bio](#)

"Art is not escape, but a way of finding order in chaos, a way of confronting life," said Robert Hayden, the first Black writer to hold the office of U.S. Poet Laureate.

Working from the idea Hayden offers, we might understand *craft* in the context of poetry as a skilled and intentional practice of finding order (by making choices about diction, rhythm, form, sonics) in the chaos of writing, beginning with the first draft.

Questions to discuss as students build an idea of the concept of craft:

- In what ways does this poem consider...
 - The idea or impetus behind a piece of writing?
 - The story a work may be trying to convey?
 - The intention behind a piece of writing—i.e., what does it want to be?

The answers to these questions are the foundation of craft—the specific choices a writer makes in order to best tell the story they want to tell.

[John Murillo Bio](#)

Excerpt from [Murillo's "Back Draft"](#) (*Guernica*, 2019).

Guernica: Can I ask about a small revision in your poem? You've changed "late April" to "May." How come?

Murillo: It's the sound. "Late April" has assonance, but "driving away in May" gives you the rhyme. And then, of course, there's the historical accuracy factor. The riots started on April 29th, 1992, and you can't get much later in April than that. But in terms of my experience, none of this is factually accurate. I didn't leave California until 1994, when I moved to DC. As my friend DJ Renegade says, "A poem is a half lie used to tell the whole truth." But yeah, to answer your question, it's mostly about sound.

Guernica: Do you read out loud when you revise?

Murillo: Absolutely. You pick up on things that way. It may be that a line needs an extra stressed syllable but you're not sure exactly how to do that. You wait on it and the two-syllable word you need might come to you while you're watching TV or washing dishes or taking a shower. Then, after some time, you come back to the poem. But that waiting is important. I think that's something people miss out on when they're rushing these books out. They don't give their ear enough time. It's about being patient with the poem, listening to what it requires.

[Poet John Murillo Reads "Mercy, Mercy, Me" for the 2021 MacDowell National Benefit](#)

Additional resources

- Hip Hop sampling as revision example: [I Love Music – The Ahmad Jamal Trio](#) to [The World Is Yours – Nas](#)
- [Cornelius Eady bio](#)
- [Audio of Eady reading "Papa Was a Rolling Stone"](#) (1:01:22 to 1:03:00)
- [Interview with Cornelius Eady and links to his music projects](#) (note: p. 133 in link).
- [On Revision Process of The Temptations' "Papa Was a Rolling Stone"](#)

Cornelius Eady – "How I Wrote 'Papa Was a Rolling Stone'" (*Furious Flower* 2019, pp. 323-328)

Have students read both drafts of the poem.

Quotes from "How I Wrote 'Papa Was A Rolling Stone,'" Cornelius Eady

- "...no two poems are ever written the same way. The last poem I've written has never seemed to help me in the writing of the next. This is part of the adventure I find in writing; I'm never 100 percent sure of what I'm up to until I'm done..." (p. 324).
- "What's necessary to me is that I begin to find what I mean to say. You will also notice that as I write, a shape is beginning to emerge. This is coming from a combination of the information in the narrative, and the way I'm beginning to hear it as beats or breaths in my head. For me, poetry is singing, and I'm always trying to be aware of what is lyrical" (p. 325).
- "Like the building, the poem will only come into being through steady work. Unlike the process of constructing a building, however, I might erect a skyscraper and then decide to pull it down and build a cottage instead" (p. 326).
- "Though I'm not 100 percent sure of this, I think I returned to this poem half a year or so later...Once I found the song that I thought came closest to what I had desired to say in my poem, I found it easy to find my way in. The song, "Papa Was a Rolling Stone," is about painful revelation and the effect it has on a family" (p. 327).

41.

PREPARED PRESENTATIONS AND LECTURE NOTES

Presentation: Historical Context for “Porgy and Bess”

Authors: Tyree Daye, Angel C. Dye, Adrienne Danyelle Oliver

Target Group: Undergraduates

This slideshow is designed to accompany a lecture that provides historical context on the theatrical performance of *Porgy and Bess* in order to complement a class discussion of “The ‘S’ in *I Loves You, Porgy*,” by Nabila Lovelace. The presentation invites students to consider how a more thorough knowledge of context and cultural references helps to “enter” the poem and consider the nuances and layers of meaning in Lovelace’s work.

[Link to presentation slides](#)

Presentation: Lecture on Craft (Ekphrasis, Epistolary Poems, and Haikus)

Authors: Mary Beth Cancienne, Meta DuEwa Jones, Carmin Wong, Dave Wooley

Target Group: High School, Undergraduates

This slideshow is designed to accompany a lecture on craft, with an emphasis on ekphrastic poetry, epistolary poetry, and haikus. Centering craft in the discussion of Black poetics with respect to form, this presentation also considers performance techniques with the inclusion of audio and video clips. Poets considered within this lesson on craft are Alan W. King, Brenda Marie Osbey, Nikki Giovanni, Natasha Trethewey, and Yalie Kamara. This presentation includes images and multiple examples that situate the selected poems within the context of Black cultural references and traditions.

Link to presentation slides **COMING SOON!**

42.

A FURIOUS FLOWER GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Authors: Shameka Cunningham, McKinley E. Melton, Adrienne Danyelle Oliver, Carmin Wong

Target Group: Facilitators of community writing workshops and seminars

Introduction

“The fight for inclusion of black authors in college literature courses and anthologies is a vital part of the fight for social justice on all levels in America, and the argument over literary theory—often changed, sometimes justly, with obscurantism and irrelevance—is an argument about how to talk about literature and culture.”

– Dr. Joanne V. Gabbin, founder, Furious Flower Poetry Center

From “Introduction,” (*Furious Flowering* 1999, p. 12)

The Furious Flower Poetry Center aims to support the teaching of Black poetry in formal educational spaces, from elementary through higher education. Yet, the Center also embraces and furthers the idea that Black poetry can and should be introduced and made accessible to students of all learning environments. We are driven by a common goal to share Black poetry and methods of teaching poetry in informal spaces of knowledge production, by utilizing the restorative and rehabilitative nature inherent in the practice of poetry writing and such genres of Black expression.

Decolonizing the Classroom Space

Furious Flower operationally defines the process of decolonizing the classroom space as shifting from a vertical “student-teacher” positionality to a “communal learning” dynamic that embodies a more horizontal exchange. In this regard, it becomes important for facilitators to reflect upon their social location and histories before embracing and uplifting those of participants in the workshop. The act of decolonization is an act of going against the settler colonial mindset that enters into new spaces to “correct” rather than integrate into a culture.

Mission Statement

The mission of this handbook is to provide a supplementary source for poetry facilitators that choose to lead the writing workshops and seminars offered in this Furious Flower Black Syllabus Project, as well as to provide the support necessary to create and reimagine the learning space as a creative, equitable, and liberatory space for the collective.

Responsibilities of the Workshop Facilitator

As you take on the role of workshop facilitator, below are some useful questions you might ask yourself in shaping your approach to the role:

Shaping your approach to the classroom space

- How do you typically begin your workshop? What are the tone-setting practices that create positive experiences?
- How do you encourage students' participation and engagement?
- How can you arrange the learning space to nurture individual experiences and facilitate inclusive dialogue?
- How can you be strategic in generating a spirit of creativity in the classroom?
- How are you establishing and making known workshop etiquette?
- In what ways can you reimagine a learning environment where everyone feels empowered and supported to contribute to the function of the classroom?

Tackling challenging topics

- How do you help students to feel heard and acknowledged as contributors to the discussion?
- How do you create a space of safety, while also recognizing that not all subject matter will be in participants' comfort zone?
- How do you work through disagreement and potentially contentious topics? How do you make room for respectful debate?
- If tension arises, then how do you maintain a safe, healthy, and productive creative and educational environment?

Giving Feedback

- How do you respond to students' ideas and creative work? How do you encourage students to practice

considerate responses and critical thinking skills?

- How are you posing questions that generate curiosity, mindfulness, and allow for the recognition of differences in experiences?
- How do you encourage and challenge students to strengthen their knowledge base within their approach to responses and producing written work?

[Furious Flower Poetry Center Resources](#)

43.

FURIOUS FLOWER POETRY CENTER RESOURCES

The Furious Flower Syllabus Hub

<https://jmu.edu/furiousflower/syllabus>

Furious Flower IV Conference Website

<https://2024.furiousflower.org>

Website and Social Media

Center Website: <https://www.jmu.edu/furiousflower/index.shtml>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FuriousFlower>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/furiousflowerpc/>

Twitter/X: <https://twitter.com/FuriousFlowerPC>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/furiousflowerpoetry>

The Fight & The Fiddle

Website: <https://fightandfiddle.com/>

Archives: <https://www.jmu.edu/furiousflower/fightandfiddle/index.shtml>

Archives

Furious Flower Poetry Center timeline: <https://www.jmu.edu/furiousflower/resources/timeline.shtml>

Prototype Conference Website: <https://furiousflower.org/>

Complete List: <https://www.jmu.edu/furiousflower/resources/archives.shtml>

JMU Special Collections:

1994 and 2004 Conferences, Other Materials: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/ffpc/>

Finding Aid: https://aspace.lib.jmu.edu/repositories/4/resources/488?_ga=2.47074855.1460503551.1687439971-1539829917.1671121823&_gl=1*2m4fgi*_ga*MTUzOTgyOTkxNy4xNjc5MTIxODIz*_ga_VDJD052M5K*MTY4NzQzOTk3MS4yMi4xLjE2ODc0NDAYNDIuNTguMC4w

Videos

1994 Overview Video: <https://www.jmu.edu/events/furiousflower/1994/09/29-ffpc.shtml>

Dr. Gabbin Interview Video Founding: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/ffpc-2004/22>

1994 Poetry Conference Session Videos: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/ffpc-1994/>

2004 Poetry Conference Session Interviews: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/ffpc-2004/>

2014 overview video: <https://newsreel.org/video/FURIOUS-FLOWER-III>

Ancestors and Inheritances: Legacies of Black Poetry: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8mrBGKRNg>

Ancestors and Inheritances– The Global Edition: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eD-Kc6GGu18>

PART VI

FEEDBACK

If you've used the Furious Flower Syllabus Project Materials, please let us know! Visit the form below to provide brief feedback on how the materials have proved useful to you. We encourage you to share reflections, experiences, insights, and suggestions. If you post about these materials on social media, please use our hashtag, **#FuriousFlowerSyllabus**, to help us keep track of how folks are responding to the work.

We look forward to hearing about how these materials have been brought to life in your classrooms and learning spaces. Thank you!

[Furious Flower Syllabus Project Feedback Form](#)

PARTICIPANT BIOS

Editors



McKinley E. Melton
FURIOUS FLOWER ADVISORY BOARD CHAIR

McKinley E. Melton, Associate Professor of English and inaugural Paxton Endowed Teaching Chair at Gettysburg College, earned his Ph.D. from the W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Prior to joining the Gettysburg College faculty, Dr. Melton was a visiting assistant professor of literature at Hampshire College from 2007-2012. He is also the recipient of a 2015 Career Enhancement Fellowship for Junior Faculty from the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation and was a 2015-16 Postdoctoral Fellow at the Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry at Emory University. Dr. Melton was also awarded a 2019-20 Frederick Burkhardt Fellowship by the American Council of Learned Societies, in order to support a year as scholar-in-residence at the Furious Flower Poetry Center at James Madison University.



Susan Facknitz
FURIOUS FLOWER ADVISORY BOARD VICE CHAIR

Susan Facknitz's poetry attempts to trace the connections between historical violence and personal trauma. Her poems have appeared in journals in the U.S., Canada and Ireland, including *Southword*, *Room*, *Poetry East*, and *New Orleans Review*. She taught Creative Writing and Irish Literature courses at James Madison University for thirty years and now leads a writers' group at Our Community Place and teaches at Blue Ridge Community College.

Authors



Anastacia-Reneé

Anastacia-Reneé (She/They) is a writer, educator, interdisciplinary artist, TEDx Speaker, and podcaster. She is the author of *Side Notes from the Archivist* (HarperCollins/Amistad), *(v.)* (Black Ocean), *Forget It* (Black Radish) and *Here In The (Middle) of Nowhere* forthcoming from HarperCollins/Amistad March 2024. Recently she was selected by NBC News as part of the list of “Queer Artist of Color Dominate 2021’s Must See LGBTQ Art Shows.” Anastacia-Reneé was former Seattle Civic Poet (2017-2019), Poet-in-Residence (2015-2017) and Hugo House and Arc Artist Fellow (2020). Her work has been anthologized in: *The Future of Black: Afrofuturism, Black Comics and Superhero Poetry*, *Home is Where You Queer Your Heart*, *Furious Flower: Seeding the Future of African American Poetry*, *Teaching Black: The Craft of Teaching on Black Life and Literature*, *Joy Has A Sound*, *Nonwhite and Woman: 131 Micro Essays on Being in the World*, *Spirited Stone: Lessons from Kubota’s Garden*, and *Seismic: Seattle City of Literature*. Her poetry and fiction have appeared in, *Hobart*, *Foglifter*, *Auburn Avenue*, *Catapult*, *Alta*, *Torch*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Cascadia Magazine*, *Ms. Magazine* and others. Reneé has received fellowships and residencies from Cave Canem, Hedgebrook, 4Culture, VONA, Ragdale, Mineral School, and The New Orleans Writers Residency. Find them on Instagram @anstaciarenee5 and Facebook @Anastacia-Renee.



allia abduallah-matta

allia abduallah-matta is a poet and Professor of English at CUNY LaGuardia, where she teaches composition, literature, creative writing, and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies courses. She writes about the culture and history of Black women and explores the presence of Black bodies and voices in fine art and poetry. She was the co-recipient of the The Jerome Lowell DeJur Prize in Poetry (2018) from The City College of New York (CCNY). Her poetry has been published in *Newtown Literary*, *Promethean*, *Marsh Hawk Review*, *Mom Egg Review*, *Vox*, *Global City Review*, and the Jam Journal Issue of *Push/Pull*. Her chapbook(s) *washed clean & blues politico* (2021) were published by harlequin creature (hcx). abduallah-matta has published critical and pedagogical articles and serves on the *Radical Teacher* and *WSQ (Women's Studies Quarterly)* editorial boards. She is working on a collection of poems inspired by archival and field research in South Carolina and Georgia, funded by a CUNY BRESI grant.



Ariana Benson

Ariana Benson was born in Norfolk, Virginia. Their debut poetry collection, *Black Pastoral* (2023, UGA Press), was selected by Willie Perdomo as winner of the 2022 Cave Canem Poetry Prize. A 2022 recipient of the Furious Flower Poetry Prize and runner up for the 2023 92Y Discovery Prize, Benson's poems appear or are forthcoming in *POETRY Magazine*, *Ploughshares*, *The Yale Review*, *Copper Nickel*, *Colorado Review*, and elsewhere. Through her writing, she strives to fashion vignettes of Blackness that speak to its infinite depth and richness. She is currently completing her MFA at Washington University in St. Louis.



Mary Beth Cancienne

Mary Beth Cancienne, PhD, is a Professor of English Education at James Madison University in the Middle and Secondary Education Department in the College of Education. She was honored in 2017-2018 as the Distinguished Teacher and in 2011-2012 as the Madison Scholar. She teaches courses in high school English methods, high school practicum, Curriculum Theory, Foundations of American Education, student teaching, and seminar. In 1999, she cofounded the Arts and Inquiry in the Visual and Performing Arts in Education SIG with the American Education Research Association. She has also published in such academic journals as the *Virginia English Journal*, *Qualitative Inquiry*, *Theory into Practice*, *the Journal of Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue* and *the Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*. Her chapters appear in such books as the *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research* (2007) and *Knowing Differently* (2008). Additionally, she co-edited, with C. Bagley, a book and CD-ROM titled *Dancing the Data* (2002, Peter Lang).



Teri Ellen Cross Davis

Teri Ellen Cross Davis is the author of *a more perfect Union*, 2019 winner of The Journal/Charles B. Wheeler Poetry Prize and *Haint*, winner of the 2017 Ohioana Book Award for Poetry. She is the 2022 recipient of the Maryland State Arts Council Individual Artist Award and the Poetry Society of America's 2020 Robert H. Winner Memorial Prize. She has received fellowships and scholarships to Cave Canem, the Virginia Center for Creative Arts, Hedgebrook, Community of Writers Poetry Workshop, the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, and more. Her work has appeared in print, online, and in many journals and anthologies.

including: *Harvard Review*, *PANK*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, and *Kenyon Review*. She is the O.B. Hardison Poetry Series Curator and Poetry Programs manager for the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington D.C. and lives in Maryland with her husband, poet Hayes Davis, and their children.

Shameka Cunningham



Shameka Cunningham is a poet, playwright, performance artist and teacher from Los Angeles. She is the host of *Let The Poem Feed You*. As a poet and educator, she has facilitated theater and creative writing workshops throughout Los Angeles County. She has an MFA in Poetry in the Expanded Field from Stetson University. She is a Watering Hole Poetry Fellow and is obsessed with poetry, ice cream and road trips. You can find her on Instagram @laughterlandlanguage.

Hayes Davis



Hayes Davis' first volume, *Let Our Eyes Linger*, was published by Poetry Mutual Press, and he won a 2022 Maryland State Arts Council Independent Artists Award. He has been anthologized in *This is What America Looks Like*, *Deep Beauty*, *Furious Flower: Seeding the Future of African American Poetry*, *Ghost Fishing: An Eco-justice Poetry Anthology*, and other collections. His work has also appeared in *Mom Egg Review*, *New England Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Auburn Avenue*, *Gargoyle*, *Kinfolks*, *Fledgling Rag*, and other journals. He holds a Masters of Fine Arts from the University of Maryland, and is a member of Cave Canem's first cohort of fellows. He has attended or been awarded writing residencies at the Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center, The Hermitage, the

Virginia Center for the Creative Arts (VCCA), Manhattanville College, and Soul Mountain. He has appeared on the Kojo Nnamdi Show on WAMU, 88.5 in Washington, D.C. and at the Hay Festival Kells in Kells, Ireland. He has taught English and directed equity and justice work in Washington, D.C.-area independent schools for 20+ years; he shares his creative and domestic life with his wife, poet Teri Ellen Cross Davis, and their children.



Tyree Daye

Tyree Daye was raised in Youngsville, North Carolina. He is the author of the poetry collections *a little bump in the earth* (forthcoming from Copper Canyon Press, 2024), *Cardinal* (Copper Canyon Press, 2020), and *River Hymns* (American Poetry Review, 2017), winner of the APR/Honickman First Book Prize.



Angel C. Dye

Angel C. Dye is a poet and researcher of African American Literature and the author of *BREATHE* (Central Square Press '21) and *My Mouth a Constant Prayer* (Backbone Press '23). Hailing from Dallas-Ft. Worth, Texas by way of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Angel is a graduate of Howard University and holds an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Kentucky. Her work has appeared in *About Place Journal*, *The Pierian Journal*, *African Voices Magazine*, *Blue Mountain Review*, *Tahoma Literary Review*, and *A Gathering Together Journal*, among other places. She writes in the tradition of Lucille Clifton, Amiri Baraka, and Sterling A. Brown, striving to carry on their legacies of unapologetic blackness in the face of oppression, radical self-

love, and artistic activism. Angel was the 2022-23 Shirley Graham Du Bois Creative-in-Residence with arts organization Castle of Our Skins. She is writing everyday to discover, as Audre Lorde explains, “the words [she does] not yet have” and using her blackness, womanness, scars, and Pentecostal roots to find new ways to pray. Angel is currently a Ph.D. in English candidate at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.



Brian Hannon

Brian Hannon is the Director of Secondary Curriculum for LMSvoice. He currently teaches AP Literature and Composition, AP Language and Composition, and Team-Taught English 11 at Hayfield Secondary School in Alexandria, Virginia. Brian was the co-founder of the poetryN.O.W., a non-profit organization that partnered with schools in the area to provide educators with the materials and resources necessary to cultivate spoken-word poetry clubs in their schools. Through his involvement with this organization, Brian went on to found the two largest youth poetry events in the area, the Hyper Bole and Louder than a Bomb, events that brought students together from all walks of life from Washington D.C., Maryland, Virginia, Massachusetts, etc. to participate in poetry competitions, open-mics, writing workshops, and more. When poetryN.O.W. was absorbed by Split This Rock, a non-profit organization in Washington D.C. that meets at the intersection of poetry and social justice, Brian moved on to serve as their “Youth and Education Development Fellow” where he continued to work in the planning and coordination of their after-school programs, open-mics, and larger events. In his current role as Director of Secondary Curriculum for LMSvoice, he oversees and curates the curriculum, ultimately striving to showcase and teach the works of culturally relevant, socially-engaged artists and expose students and teachers to a wide spectrum of diverse voices. He also works part-time for the Ultimate Fighting Championship and as a Muay Thai instructor. In 2018, Brian was a finalist for Fairfax County Public Schools Teacher of the Year and was his conference’s Coach of the Year for Hayfield’s Varsity Tennis Team.

T.J. Hendrix



T.J. Hendrix is a licensed educator and has taught Secondary English Language Arts, Creative Writing, and Adult Education in Arkansas, Georgia, and Washington, D.C., as well as Secondary Education in the College of Education at the University of Central Arkansas in Conway, Arkansas. Astride her profession as an educator, she has written fiction and non-fiction pieces for small publications, web blogs, and has published in the *Handbook of Research on Blended Learning Pedagogies and Professional Development in Higher Education* (2018) edited by Sagini Keengwe, Ph.D. Hendrix has managed and published pieces on her own blog *A Safe Space* (2017 – 2020) and used her writing talents as a podcaster on the audio podcast *This Year I Turn 40*. She's also the editor of the Thurgood Marshall Academy PCHS anthology, *Chaotic Harmony* (2021) which was released through Amazon Books. As an educator, she works to create unique learning opportunities that are relevant and provide opportunities to engage with diverse populations and explore different possibilities. She sees her time with young people as an opportunity to grow personally and professionally by examining the experience of the 21st-century learners and finding a balance between traditional educational values and current educational needs. Find her on Instagram @tjhendrix and @restlessvoices.

DaMaris B. Hill



DaMaris B. Hill is a poet and creative scholar. Her most recent book, *Breath Better Spent: Living Black Girlhood*, is deemed “urgent” and “luminous” in a starred Publisher’s Weekly review. Hill’s first poetry collection, *A Bound Woman Is a Dangerous Thing*, is a powerful narrative-in-verse that bears witness to

Black women burdened by incarceration. It was an Amazon #1 Best Seller in African American Poetry, a Publishers Weekly Top 10 History Title, and 2020 NAACP Image Award nominee for Outstanding Literary Work in Poetry. Hill's other books include *The Fluid Boundaries of Suffrage*, *Jim Crow: Staking Claims in the American Heartland*, and *\Vi-zə-bəl\ \Teks-chərs\ (Visible Textures)*. Her digital work, "Shut Up In My Bones," is a twenty-first century poem that uses remix/pastiche/intertextuality to honor a specific cultural past, while working to construct visions of a better future.

Similar to her creative process, Hill's scholarly research is interdisciplinary. She is a 2023 fellow at the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University. Hill is a Professor of Creative Writing, English, and African American Studies at the University of Kentucky.



Meta DuEwa Jones

FURIOUS FLOWER ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER

Meta DuEwa Jones is an Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Jones authored *The Muse is Music: Jazz Poetry from the Harlem Renaissance to the Spoken Word* (University of Illinois, 2011), awarded honorable mention for the MLA William Sanders Scarborough Prize. Jones' current manuscript, *Black Alchemy*, is a hybrid genre work of poetry, theory, and memoir that explores collaborations between writers and visual artists as they map memories of and travels within the African diaspora. Jones' creative scholarship, focused on African American literature and inter-arts, has been published in diverse venues. Jones' research and writing have been supported by fellowships from the National Humanities Center, the Schlesinger Library at Harvard University, the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University, the Rockefeller, Woodrow Wilson, and Mellon foundations, the Stanford Humanities Center, and the Carter G. Woodson Institute.



Shauna M. Morgan

FURIOUS FLOWER ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER

Dr. Shauna M. Morgan is a poet-scholar and Associate Professor of creative writing and Africana literature at the University of Kentucky where she also serves as Director of Equity and Inclusion Initiatives in the Center for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT). Before joining the University of Kentucky, Morgan was tenured on the faculty of English at Howard University where she taught from 2012-2019. Both her scholarly work and her poetry are deeply engaged with traditions of global Black art and culture. Her critical work has been published in *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *South Atlantic Review*, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, *College Language Association Journal*, and elsewhere. Her poetry has appeared in *A Gathering Together*, *Interviewing the Caribbean*, *A Literary Field Guide to Southern Appalachia*, *ProudFlesh: New Afrikan Journal of Culture, Politics & Consciousness*, among other periodicals and anthologies. Morgan's chapbook, *Fear of Dogs & Other Animals*, was published by Central Square Press. She is currently at work on "The Life Thing in Us: Decoloniality and the Aesthetics of Liberation in Contemporary Black Poetry," a book that explores the twenty-first-century poetry of the Black diaspora and investigates the ways in which the poets and their works move along a continuum of decoloniality in the ongoing struggle for global Black liberation. Her current creative project, "Ordinal," is a poetry manuscript which re-imagines the Victorian-era Anglican book of prayer as a collection of Black women's syncretistic laments, praises, and songs that attempt to excise traumas and liberate sexualities. Morgan was awarded *Interviewing the Caribbean's* inaugural Catherine James Palmer Poetry Prize, and she was a fellow at the Obama Institute for Transnational American Studies at Johannes Gutenberg Universität in Mainz, Germany. She tends to a hopeful garden at her home at the Artists' Village in the historic East End of Lexington, Kentucky.



Adrienne Danyelle Oliver

Dr. Adrienne Danyelle Oliver is a poet-educator, hip-hop scholar from Little Rock, AR currently living in the SF Bay Area. She earned a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from Mills College, as well as a Master of Arts in Technical Writing from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. She was an inaugural Poets and Scholars fellow at Rutgers Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice and a Furious Flower Legacy Seminar Fellow in 2019. She has also completed fellowships with VONA and the Hurston/Wright Foundation. Dr. Adrienne enjoys writing about intergenerational healing. She is a Pushcart Prize Nominee with two published chapbooks, *the body has memories* (Nomadic Press) and *collective madness* (Finishing Line Press), which was nominated for the Maya Angelou Book Award. Part poetry, part memoir, part dream, these chapbooks are the beginning of a liberation she hopes to witness among all bodies harboring historical trauma. Some of Adrienne's favorite authors include Maya Angelou and Toni Morrison. When she is not writing, Adrienne leads well-being writing circles for Black writers and curates Black Gold Storytellers, an award-winning intergenerational storytelling circle that features elders who have migrated from the South to California.



Leona Sevick

FURIOUS FLOWER ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER

Leona Sevick is the Press 53 Poetry Award Winner for her first full-length book of poems, *Lion Brothers*. Her work appears in *Orion*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Blackbird*, and *The Southern Review*. She was a 2019 Walter E. Dakin Fellow for the Sewanee Writers' Conference and serves as advisory board member of the

Furious Flower Poetry Center. She is provost and professor of English at Bridgewater College in Virginia, where she teaches Asian American literature. Find her on Instagram @lasevick, Twitter/X @lsevick and Facebook @leona.sevick.1



James Smethurst

James Smethurst is a Professor of Afro-American Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He is the author of *The New Red Negro: The Literary Left and African American Poetry, 1930-1946*; *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s*; *The African American Roots of Modernism*; *Brick City Vanguard: Amiri Baraka, Black Music, Black Modernity*; and *Behold the Land: A History of the Black Arts Movement in the South*. He co-edited *Left of the Color Line: Race, Radicalism and Twentieth-Century Literature of the United States* (with Bill Mullen), *Radicalism in the South Since Reconstruction* (with Chris Green and Rachel Lee Rubin), and *SOS—Calling All Black People: A Black Arts Movement Reader* (with John Bracey and Sonia Sanchez). His current book project studies the interchange between the Black Arts Movement in Britain and in the United States.



Dana A. Williams

FURIOUS FLOWER ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER

Dana A. Williams is a Professor of African American literature and Dean of the Graduate School at Howard University. Previously, she served as Chair of English at Howard for nine years. She currently serves as president of the Modern Languages Association, and she is a former president of the College Language Association (the

oldest and largest professional organization in the US for faculty of color who teach languages and literature). In 2016, she was nominated by President Barack Obama to serve as a member of the National Humanities Council. In addition to her work at Howard, she has held faculty positions at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge; Northwestern University, Evanston, IL as a Ford Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow; and Duke University, as a faculty fellow of the John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute.



L. Lamar Wilson

L. Lamar Wilson (he/we) is the author of *Sacrilegion* (Carolina Wren Press, 2013), a Thom Gunn Award finalist, and associate producer of *The Changing Same* (POV Shorts, 2019), which streams at American Documentary and airs on PBS. His poems and essays have appeared at the *Academy of American Poets' Poem-a-Day*, *Callaloo*, *Interim*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, *The New York Times*, *NPR*, *Obsidian*, *Oxford American*, *Poetry*, *south*, *TriQuarterly*, *The Washington Post*, and elsewhere. Wilson, who spent nearly two decades editing in the nation's top newsrooms, including the *Times* and the *Post*, has received two Pushcart Prize nominations as well as fellowships from the Cave Canem, Civitella Ranieri, Ragdale, and Hurston-Wright foundations. He is an Affrilachian Poet and teaches creative writing, African American poetics, and film studies at Florida State University and The Mississippi University for Women. Image description (for the visually impaired): This black-and-white photo features a male-presenting person with thick black eyebrows, rounded brown eyes, shadowy Van Dyke beard with thick soul patch, and shoulder-length interlocked black, brown, and maroon hair. Because Wilson identifies as Two-Spirit, he chooses the pronoun "we," rather than "they," in addition to "he." Among our rural northwest Florida kin on the unceded land settled by ancestral indigenous tribal members who intermarried with maroon Africans before and after European colonizers began procreating with both peoples, our tawny skin would make us a "redbone." We are not smiling or smizing. Still.



Carmin Wong

Carmin Wong is a poet, playwright, and a dual-title PhD student in English Literature and African American and Diaspora Studies at Pennsylvania State University. She is interested in the intersections of spoken and written literature, which she credits to her Caribbean heritage and immigrant identity. Born in Georgetown, Guyana, and raised in Jamaica, Queens, New York, Carmin holds a BA in English with a minor in Playwriting from Howard University and an MFA in poetry writing from the University of New Orleans, where she became Associate Poetry Editor of *Bayou Magazine*. Carmin's care for language and disavowal as well as Black girlhood, daughterhood, and womanhood appear through her works. She began her poetry career competing in poetry slams at Lincoln Center, Nuyorican Poets Cafe, Apollo Theater, and elsewhere. Her poems and interviews have since been broadcast on WRBH and WPSU Radio, and her writing is featured in several publications, including *Xavier Review*, *Obsidian*, and more. She is the recipient of artist grants from Poets & Writers, Scholastic, Jeremy O. Harris and The Bushwick Starr, and more. Carmin's playwriting debut took place at The John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts. She is the co-author of *A Chorus Within Her*, produced by Theater Alliance, and playwright of *Finding Home: Adeline Lawson Graham, Colored Citizen of Bellefonte*, based on lost narratives of 19th century Black residents in Centre County PA. Carmin also curates literary arts and community-based projects and teaches poetry reading and writing at Centre County Correctional Facility. Find her on here [website](#), Instagram @WhatYouReadingTheSeries and @DearBrothaMalcolm, Twitter/X @DearBroMalcolm, and Facebook and LinkedIn @Carmin Wong.



Dave Wooley

Dave Wooley is an English, Journalism, and Creative Writing teacher at Westhill High School in Stamford, Connecticut, where he has taught since 2001. He has served as a Co-Adviser for the school's hybrid newspaper, *The Westword*, since 2003. He is also an adjunct Professor at Fairfield University, teaching Philosophy of Hip Hop, and a teaching fellow at the Connecticut Writing Project. Dave is one half of the rap group d_Cyphernauts and a hip hop educator who has presented at the HipHopEd conference, the NCTE annual conference, and the CSPA conference, among others. He served as a curriculum and music coordinator for the National Endowment for the Humanities' seminar "From Harlem to Hip-Hop: African-American History, Literature, and Song" which was hosted at Fairfield University. Since 2017, Dave has been a participating scholar in the last three Legacy Seminars at the Furious Flower Center for Black Poetry. He lives in Stratford, Connecticut with his wife and four children. Find him on Instagram @othello_nauts, Twitter/X @othello88, and Facebook @dave.wooley.



Joanne V. Gabbin (preface)

Joanne V. Gabbin is the former Executive Director of the Furious Flower Poetry Center and Professor Emerita of English at James Madison University. She is author of *Sterling A. Brown: Building the Black Aesthetic Tradition* and a children's book, *I Bet She Called Me Sugar Plum*. She is also the editor of *The Furious Flowering of African American Poetry*, *Furious Flower: African American Poetry from the Black Arts Movement to the Present*, *Mourning Katrina: A Poetic Response to Tragedy*, *Shaping Memories: Reflections of African American Women Writers*, and *Furious Flower: Seeding the Future of African American Poetry*, with co-editor Lauren K. Alleyne. She is the founder and organizer of the Wintergreen Women Writers Collective. A dedicated educator, poet, and scholar, she has received numerous awards for excellence in teaching, scholarship and leadership. Among them are the College Language Association Creative Scholarship Award; the SCHEV Outstanding Faculty Award; the Provost Award for Excellence; the JMU Distinguished Faculty Award; and induction in the International Literary Hall of Fame. In 2021 a building at James Madison University, Joanne V. and Alexander Gabbin Hall, was named in honor of her and her husband for their outstanding contributions to the university and the community.

Reviewers



Lauren K. Alleyne

Lauren K. Alleyne (she/her) serves as Executive Director of the Furious Flower Poetry Center and a Professor of English. She is author of two collections *Honeyfish* (2019), *Difficult Fruit* (2014), two chapbooks *Dawn in the Kaatskills* and *(Un)Becoming Gretel*, and co-editor of *Furious Flower: Seeding the Future of African American Poetry*. Her work has been widely published in journals and anthologies internationally, including venues such as *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, and *Ms.*, among several others. Alleyne, who hails from the twin island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, has been recognized with a US Artist Award nomination (2023), an NAACP Image Award nomination for Outstanding Poetry (2020), the Green Rose Prize from New Issues Press (2017) and has been shortlisted for the BOCAS Prize for Caribbean Literature and the Library of Virginia prize for poetry (2020). In 2022, Alleyne was awarded an Outstanding Faculty Award from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, and the JMU Agency Star Award.



L. Renée

L. Renée is a poet, nonfiction writer, and collector of her family's stories. A descendant of proud Black Appalachians who labored in coal towns and tobacco fields, she won *Appalachian Review's* 2020 Denny C. Plattner Award, the international 2022 *Rattle* Poetry Prize, and third place for the international 2023 *Poetry London* Prize. Nominated for *Best New Poets*, *Best of the Net*, and two Pushcart Prizes, her work has been

published in *Obsidian*, *Tin House Online*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Poet Lore*, *the minnesota review*, and *American Life in Poetry*, selected by Kwame Dawes. She has received fellowships from Cave Canem, the Watering Hole, and the National Association of Black Storytellers. Her work has been supported by the Barbara Deming Memorial Fund, Inc., Oak Spring Garden Foundation, Monson Arts, the Poetry Foundation, and others. L. Renée holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Indiana University, where she was nonfiction editor of *Indiana Review*, and an MS in Journalism from Columbia University, where she was a Joseph Pulitzer II and Edith Moore Fellow. She was previously Assistant Director of the Furious Flower Poetry Center and Assistant Professor of English at James Madison University. Find here via her [website](#).



Iliana Cosme-Brooks

Iliana Cosme-Brooks (she/her) is a graduate student studying Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication at James Madison University. She specializes in academic editing and museum/nonprofit writing, among many other interests. Her previous editorial work appears in the *Archives of American Art Journal*, *constellations: a cultural rhetorics publishing space*, and *agnès films*.

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