*Filling Poems*

Analyzing and anchoring poems in imagery with Lauren Camp’s *One Hundred Hungers*

Designed by John Darr

Like all art forms, poetry has a high ceiling for ambition – it can fit many ideas into a small space. However, an effective poem anchors these ideas in characters and images that the reader can follow. A reader’s ability to track concrete objects within a poem allows for effective analysis, while a writer’s ability to do the same within their own poem leads to effective editing and efficient drafting. Both skills are most effectively developed with the help of models that readers can engage and writers can emulate.

Lauren Camp’s *One Hundred Hungers* is a prime example of one such models. Rich in imagery with a precise sense of setting, *One Hundred Hungers* provides an accessible read that is rich in content. The collection’s elegant, striking narratives convey the lives of Arab-American immigrants caught between times and worlds. Through *One Hundred Hungers,* students can observe the effective handling of the concrete and abstract, analyze the writer’s tactics on multiple levels, and find inspiration to write precise personal poetry.

This lesson fulfills the following objectives:

1. Students will be able to identify concrete and abstract sections within a poem.
2. Students will be able to analyze the relationship between concrete and abstract sections within a poem.
3. Students will be able to write about abstract topics and ideas using concrete images.

Homework assigned to prepare for this class:

N/A

Lesson Structure:

(Total Length - 75 minutes)

1. **Opening Journal: Think about something you talk or argue about with friends and family. What opinions do they share with you regarding that topic, and what opinion do you hold? Are there specific examples that form the basis of those opinions?** (Journal for ~7 minutes, discuss in small groups for ~8 minutes.)
2. **Creative Writing Exercise:** Using the topic from your journal, write a small poem built around something concrete (a fact, event or experience) that lead to you having that opinion. You should use imagery and concrete detail as much as possible. Try not to state your opinion directly, but rather to let it come to life through your poem’s imagery and description. (~ 10 minutes)
3. **Historical Introduction to *One Hundred Hungers:*** Watch “Remembering the Farhud.” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQiiKxpc42s>) as a class (~2 minutes). Have students individually read “Letter to Baghdad” (p. 62) and “First View of America.” (p. 72). (~8 minutes).

**Current Running Time: 35 Minutes**

1. **Continued:** Have students gather in small groups to discuss the following questions: How do the video and the poems relate to each other? What is each poem about? What are the most powerful and memorable parts of the poems and why? (~10 minutes small groups, ~5 minutes large class discussion.)
2. **Close Reading:** Have students individually read “Pause Hawk Cloud Enter” (p. 5) and identify five images and five non-image sentences/lines/ideas. (~7 minutes) Students should then discuss with a group the images and ideas they chose, explaining why the images and ideas they chose stuck out to them. Each group should prepare three image/idea combinations and explain how the two parts of each combinations complement, strengthen, or complicate each other. (~8 minutes)
3. **Individual Analysis / Closing Journal:** Students flip through *One Hundred Hungers* to find a poem that they find especially powerful. The journal should answer the following questions: what does the poem make you feel? What lines and words in the poem specifically help generate those feelings? (~10 minutes)

**Overall Time: 75 Minutes**

**Critical Essay: *One Hundred Hungers***

One Hundred Hungers engages a group of core objects repeatedly. For this essay, you will explore the use and development of one such object or category of objects throughout One Hundred Hungers. Your essay should explore how, then why, the object is used in multiple poems. For example, you may talk about how the object plays a part in the narrative of a poem, how it helps form an image, or how it acts as a symbol; then, you’d explain why such a function helps create meaning within the poem as a whole. Your essay should then be able to synthesize these functions and meanings into an overall thesis with a form similar to the following:

*In her poetry, Lauren Camp uses X object to do Y, which asserts meaning Z throughout her collection.*

To guide yourself through this process, follow the steps below:

1. **Read through the poetry collection and jot down objects that stand out / recur.** This will give you an idea of possible topics for your essay.
2. **Pick a possible object and skim back through the collection to locate where it is used, looking for a pattern that overarches many of the object’s uses.** If you see a pattern, you probably are very close to finding your thesis. If not, try again with another object until you find something more suitable.
3. **Form a thesis using the given format as a starting point.** Once you have something similar to the given thesis, you can always shift your idea to be more precise or interesting. If you’re having a hard time shaping your thesis, it might be a good idea to go back to step two and try a different topic. Make sure you approve your thesis with your instructor before moving on to the next step.
4. **Go back to the examples you found in Step 2 that are relevant to your thesis and take notes on them.** Do this with as many examples as possible. If you find that an example generates many ideas that fit under your thesis, you’ll probably want to give that example a lot of room for analysis in your essay. If an example only offers a few interesting thoughts, it might be wise to use it as a passing note or even to not use it at all. Make sure you have at least three strong examples before you go on to the next step.
5. **Outline your essay.** With your thesis at the head, organize your ideas and examples in a logical order. You should use minor examples throughout the essay to bolster your main points.
6. **Write the essay.** Using your outline as a roadmap, draft the essay. Give yourself the flexibility to go back and look for more evidence when you come up with new ideas, but try to stick with your outline to make your draft as clear and focused as possible. Try not to worry too much about phrasing and editing while writing; that’s what the next step is for.
7. **Revise the essay.** In addition to using a spell check and reading back through the essay for errors, use read-aloud and peer editing to get a more thorough, distanced perspective on your work.
8. **Turn in the essay and pat yourself on the back.** Good luck!

**Assignment Rubric:**

**Presence of a strong, clear thesis: \_\_\_\_ / 15**

**Provision of relevant evidence: \_\_\_\_ / 25**

**Analysis & defense of evidence: \_\_\_\_ / 35**

**Structure: \_\_\_\_ / 15**

**Grammar & Mechanics: \_\_\_\_ / 10**

**Total: \_\_\_\_ / 100**

**Creative Assignment: *One Hundred Hungers***

One of the great strengths of *One Hundred Hungers* is its cohesion as a collection. Camp’s focus on a few core topics makes her work easy to navigate even as she conjures rich, specific details and images to grant texture to her work. In order to work towards this strength in our poetry, we will be working on a ten-poem chapbook with a central focus. All the poems in your chapbook must be unified through one of the following means:

1. They must all take place in the same setting OR
2. They must all focus on the same topic, e.g. food, travel, a political or social issue, etc. OR
3. They must all take place within a short, set block of time – a month at the most.

Your challenge is to make a collection that is both unified and varied. While the chosen ‘unification factor’ cannot be broken in any poem, you should experiment with point of view, plot, and every other factor at your disposal to make your collection a far-reaching exploration of the topic at hand.

After you have finished your collection, you’ll write a two-page reflection. The first half should talk about why you chose the ‘unification factor’ you did and how it affected your collection. The second half should elaborate on this by analyzing a poem within the collection, explaining how individual lines and literary devices create meaning within the poem and display the strengths of the collection as a whole.

**Assignment Rubric:**

**Presence of all required materials:** \_\_\_\_ / **35**

**Poetry Effort & Polish:** \_\_\_\_ / **35**

**Reflection Content: \_\_\_\_ / 20**

 Reflection on Unification Factor of Collection \_\_\_\_ / 10

 Evaluation of Single Poem \_\_\_\_ / 10

**Overall Grammar & Mechanics: \_\_\_\_ / 10**

**Total: \_\_\_\_ / 100**