Sean Cho Ayres

Found Poetry & Lucky Fish

Age Group: high school, undergraduate, graduate, community audience
Materials: *Lucky Fish,* Aimee Nezhukumatathil, electronic device with internet access
Medium: in person or virtual

Lesson Overview: through reading, discussion and exploration, this lesson offers an opportunity for students to engage with found poetry, and find poetry in the language of the contemporary everyday world.

The Lesson

Lecture

Definition: Found poems take existing texts and refashion them, reorder them, and present them as poems. The literary equivalent of a collage, found poetry is often made from newspaper articles, street signs, graffiti, speeches, letters, or even other poems. Courtesy of The Academy of American Poets

History: Found poetry is typically traced back to the 1920s, when the Dada movement was first emerging, followed quickly by Surrealism. (For more on these artistic movements, check out the "Connection to Visual Art" tab in this LibGuide.) Artists and poets from these movements emphasized the unconscious, chance, and juxtaposition in their work, ideas that would later play into such found poetry techniques as cut-up (championed by William S. Burroughs). The use of everyday objects in artistic work became a signature of Dada--and also of found poetry, which utilizes any pre-existing text, whether "literary" in nature or not, as the source of a new poetic creation. - Courtesy of Simmons

Examples: Many great examples can be found on the literary journal *The Found Poetry Review*

Discussion

- What do you think of when someone says "found poetry"
- What are examples of source texts to pull language from?
- What are the benefits of the found poetry genre compared to traditional poetry?
- What are some of the challenges or drawbacks of found poetry/creating found poetry?

Read and Discuss

the title and epigraph of "DEAR AMY NEHZOOUKAMMYATOOTILL," 45pg.

What information do the title and epigraph of the poem give us?
What do we know about the poem from the epigraph and title?

- What is the source text?
- Who is the "you"?
- Who are the "I"'s throughout the text?
- What are your tonal expectations of the poem?

Activity #1

Comb through your email and find at least 10 different sentences from 3 different emails, and paste them into a word document. Aim for a variety in both sentence type, and content.

Consider using different "types" of emails: how does the language of an advertisement differ from an email from your boss, or from a loved one? Do you have any poetry related emails to pull from?

Reading and Discussion

Read the poem from "DEAR AMY NEHZOOUKAMMYATOOTILL," 45pg.

While reading, keep the source text and speaker/you tension in mind.

Discuss the following questions

Beyond the craft of the poem, what are the central concerns of the content? What moments lead you to this idea?

Describe and compare the tone of the first and last sentences of the poem? Describe the movement and how the poem ended up in this shift.

Activity #2

Select two lines from activity #1. Make one your starting point, and keep the 2nd one in mind for your ending point. Consider the tonality each line could be used in depending on the context and surrounding language. Begin to draft a poem using the remaining lines from activity #2.

***Feel free to go back to your email to cull a new grouping of lines as needed.

End Discussion

Describe your experience working with email found poetry?
What were the challenges? Do you have any favorite moments from the draft?
Did you have to return to your emails for more lines?
Were you keeping the end line in mind while working with the draft?